

#4

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LEE SANDLIN: MY SO-CALLED LIFE AND "QUALITY TELEVISION"

Spectrum

THE MAGAZINE OF TELEVISION, FILM, & COMICS!

THE
X
FILES

**Adam
Hughes
Interview
& Checklist!**



- Second Season Episode Guide!
 - Detailed Analysis and Commentary!
- Magazine Article Checklist!
- David Duchovny in *Twin Peaks*!

COVERING THE SPECTRUM

For many reasons, television has carried a reputation as a second class art form, not to be taken as seriously as motion pictures. One reason for this: television programming did not strive to provide more than episodic, formula entertainment—be it sitcom or drama. Every week, a new episode appeared featuring the same characters in a new predicament. By program's end the conflict was resolved, but the characters didn't grow or change—surely a bare essential to any meaningful drama. Hence, the writing on such programming was routine and simplistic. Episodes could be televised in any order whatsoever. (Imagine how frightening it would be if the days of your life could be replayed in some haphazard order—and make sense!) No wonder television was considered a "wasteland."

Over the past three decades, important changes have reshaped much of television. In the eighties, numerous cable channels began to coincide with the huge increase in homes subscribing to such services; The Fox Network commenced on a limited basis in 1987 and gradually increased its output; and recently Warner Bros. and Paramount have started their own networks. Of course, more television programs doesn't necessarily mean more quality—but it certainly increases the odds. Plus, there's the increased competition between companies—not only networks, but, in recent years, the rising popularity of video games, computers, and video tapes. And theatrical films have been out there for many years.

In some cases, networks fought back with an increased pandering to programming for the lowest common denominator. But fortunately, some producers learned about the unique power of the medium and turned some of its distinct features to their advantage. Because programs appeared on a weekly basis, a sense of continuity could be instilled in a series. Characters could change over

time, and storylines could unfold at a leisurely pace. This was a story-telling advantage film did not enjoy.

Within the past five to ten years, two interests have coincided—the networks' fight to maintain an audience and creators' growing appreciation of television's unique storytelling possibilities. One intersection of these interests has been the increasing number of filmmakers willing to "descend" into the world of television. Both sides had to compromise. Filmmakers had to surrender the slower-paced filming schedules and high budgets film often accords, but in return they got to tell much longer stories and reach potentially huge audiences impossible with film. Networks, for their part, made efforts to accommodate directors who did not see themselves as mere hired hands. The result produced a situation whereby some of television's "immutable laws" turned out to be quite malleable.

Ten years ago, Michael Mann brought a film look to *Crime Story* and ended up telling essentially a single two-season story. And yet, although Mann had directed films (perhaps most notably his nihilistic, stylish *Thief*), he came from a solid television background. Substantially dramatic changes would occur later when ABC allowed David Lynch and Mark Frost considerable leeway on *Twin Peaks* in 1990. Lynch had virtually no knowledge of the workings of television, and Frost—who did have intimate knowledge of such—was frustrated with the industry's lack of maturity and set out to devise a show that would "be very subversive to the medium."

Although neither *Crime Story* nor *Twin Peaks* lasted beyond two seasons, the strong barrier between film and television crumbled considerably. In recent years, television has attracted a level of film talent that years ago would never have ventured into the Television Ghetto. Robert Zemeckis, Oliver Stone, Tim Burton,

Woody Allen, and Robert DeNiro have all tried their hands at producing network programming. Some have been more successful than others, but these directors acknowledge the power and freedom of television. While they have adapted their styles to it, they have also manipulated television to fit their own interests and visions. For instance Mann, then Lynch and Frost, proved that the production values of film could be created on a television schedule (to which *The X-Files* is a beneficiary). In directing much of *Twin Peaks*, Lynch was unafraid to defy many of television's tried and true conventions, and the result was some of the most stunning images ever to be broadcast on a television network. His episodes of *Twin Peaks* are arguably some of the director's best work, ranking up there with the Oscar-nominated *Elephant Man* and *Blue Velvet*.

More and more frequently, prominent film directors are venturing into television's invigorating waters. Recently, Quentin Tarantino (arguably the hottest director in Hollywood because of *Pulp Fiction*) directed a stunning episode of *ER*, while Barry Levinson (well-known for such acclaimed films as *Rain Man*, *The Natural*, and *Bugsy*) is the executive producer of *Homicide: Life on the Street* and directed both its first season premiere and its most recent season finale. We hear that next year Francis Ford Coppola will be reworking his classic film *The Conversation* for television.

The lines have blurred and many barriers have fallen. Both film and television attract skilled artisans who understand that each medium provides a different type of canvas on which to paint. Today's most talented movie directors recognize that television allows them a new and rewarding way in which to express themselves.

Craig Miller
John Thorne

Spectrum™

THE MAGAZINE OF TELEVISION, FILM, & COMICS!

Produced by **CRAIG MILLER & JOHN THORNE**, Co-Editors

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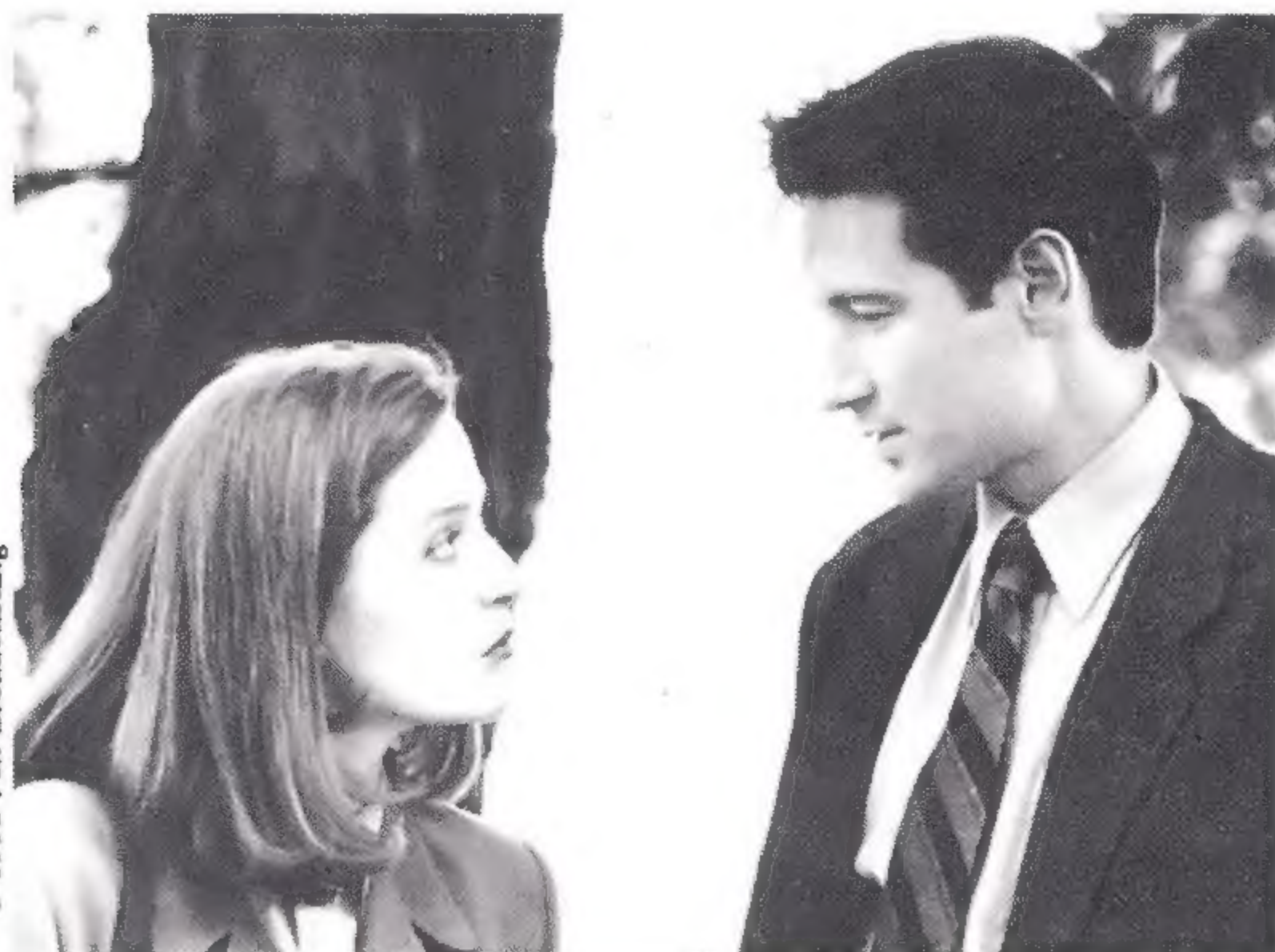
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COVERS: X-Files photo by Ken Staniforth © 1995 Fox Broadcasting; Ghost illustration by Adam Hughes © 1995 Dark Horse Comics, Inc.; Scarlett illustration by Adam Hughes © 1991 Hasbro. Ghost and Scarlett coloring by Robert Alvord.



AN OVERVIEW OF THE X-FILES: SEASON TWO

One Year Later

What a difference ten months can make. Last year, as we prepared *The X-Files* first season review in *Wrapped in Plastic* 12, the show had barely managed to claw its way onto the fall schedule. When the year-end ratings came out, *XF* placed a dismal #102. And yet one could sense momentum picking up—not in the ratings (strangely, the final episode, “The Erlenmeyer Flask,” was one of the lowest-rated episodes of the season, despite heavy promotion), but in a recognition that the show was building a solid base of support. That support may not have been a mile wide, but it was certainly a mile deep. For Fox, this must have been enough to renew the series. Ironically, the murderous Friday-night scheduling may have worked in the show’s favor—ratings expectations are never high for that night, especially on Fox.

When *WIP* 12 went to press in late July, few magazines contained *XF* articles, and only one national magazine had featured it on the cover—well, one and a half. *Starlog* 202 (May 1994) pictured Mulder and Scully. The July 2, 1994 issue of *TV Guide* split its run; most parts of the country received a Reba McEntire cover, while a few areas (primarily along the West Coast) received a beautiful Duchovny/Anderson cover. But intense following for the show still had not begun. Last summer we took some of those limited-distribution *TV Guides* to the San Diego Comic Convention—the biggest in the country—and sold only *one*, even though they were priced at just \$2.50. (Our last copies sold at \$35 a couple of months ago.)

It’s never easy to determine why something suddenly rises (or falls) in popularity. We can all think of “sure-fire” products that failed, just as “sleepers” rise to take their places. Now, of course, *XF* is a media darling—dozens of magazines have just

“discovered” the series and have been busily preparing articles and the like.

Blessing in Disguise

As the first season of *XF* drew to a close, we expressed the hope that, during the break in preparing for a second season, Chris Carter and his producers would coordinate the direction of the series (in addition to nailing down what had already occurred). The first season consisted primarily of a collection of single episodes. There was some episode-to-episode continuity—the best example being “Squeeze” and its follow-up “Tooms”—but for the most part the show exhibited little sense of any kind of “grander scheme.” This is not surprising; Duchovny has stated in interviews he expected his work on the show to be a six-episode gig. One cannot heap too much blame on Carter for failing to map out a long-range plan for a series that would be lucky to survive to the end of its first season.

But when a second season was granted, we assumed (or perhaps merely hoped) that the producers would develop a larger backstory and gradually reveal it during the upcoming year. Season Two did have more of a serial feel than the first, but much of this was the result of Gillian Anderson’s pregnancy—something out of the show’s control. Agent Alex Krycek’s arrival required some sort of episode-to-episode continuity. Also, the producers had worked themselves into a box in “The Erlenmeyer Flask” by shutting down the *X-Files* division; obviously that event could not be ignored in new episodes. And this season’s pair of two-parters helped give the illusion that there was a “big picture” story.

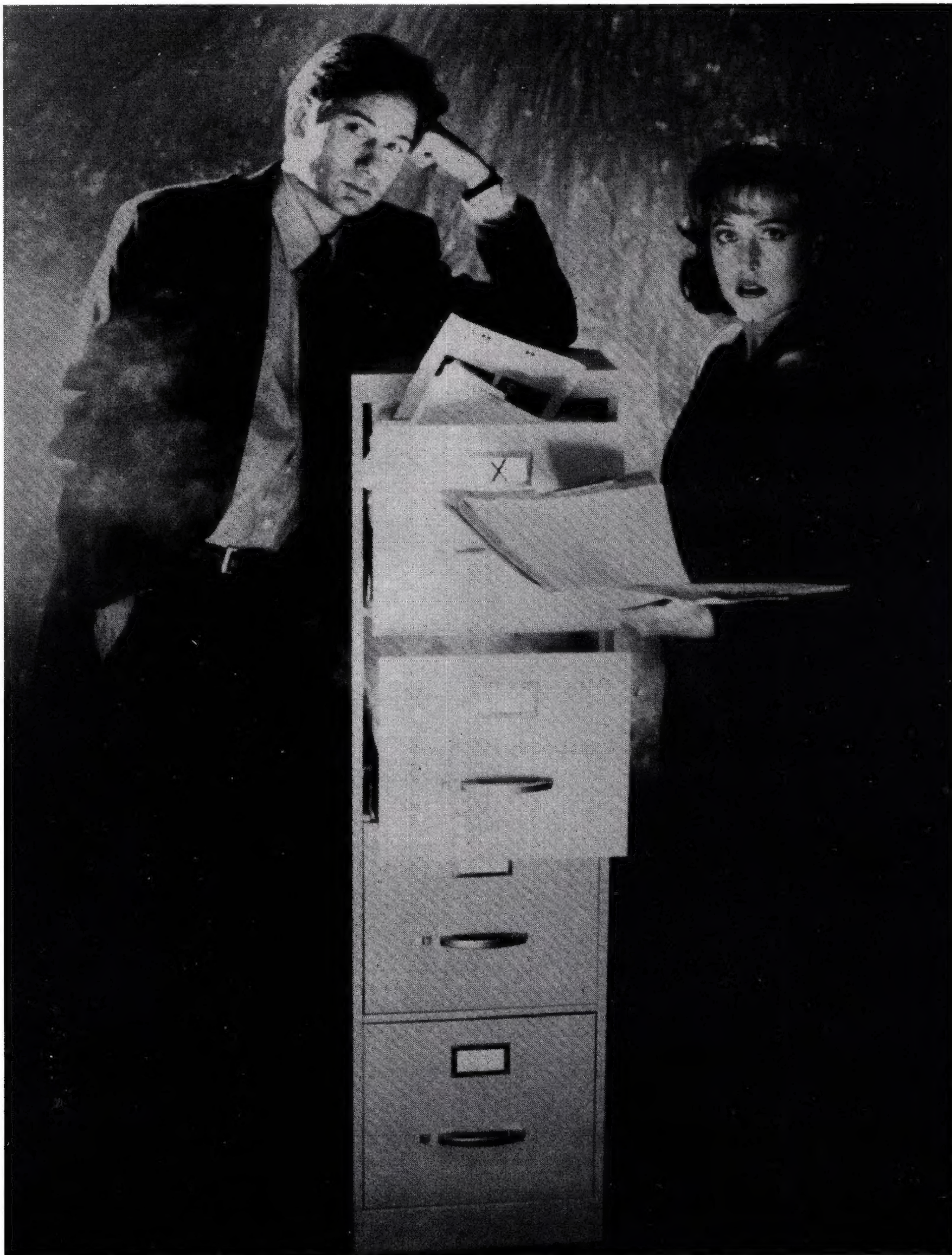
But by far, the most important event of the first third of the second season was Anderson’s pregnancy. Fans wondered how (or if) it would be integrated into the

storyline. According to rumors, there was some thought of replacing her with another actress, but the decision was made (by whomever) to shoot around it. This is why in the early episodes Scully is usually standing or sitting behind something and wearing large overcoats. Although it seemed obvious when the shows initially aired—everyone was talking about it—in re-viewing the episodes for this issue, we didn’t find the tricks to be all that intrusive. The producers managed to employ a number of clever devices to hide Anderson’s pregnancy, and it’s likely that, ten years from now when the show is running in syndication, new viewers won’t notice much of anything out of the ordinary.

Anderson’s pregnancy, however, forced Carter and the other writers to abandon—however temporarily—the show’s formula plotting and storytelling. “Sleepless” allowed Mulder to work with a new partner, Krycek. “Duane Barry” was, at its core, the same old UFO abduction story, but it led to “Ascension,” in which Scully was “abducted” and left the series temporarily. Since so much of the show emphasized the interaction between the two leads, Carter and the Fox executives must have been nervous with such a plot, but it paid off with some of the best episodes to date, culminating with Scully’s return in “One Breath,” the second season’s finest hour.

How unfortunate that in subsequent episodes, the writers did not continue with some of the more daring storytelling techniques they proved they could accomplish. Of course, by this time the series was gaining respectable ratings, and the incentive for a regular, substantial break from the formula may have been slight.

Still, even now the seeds have been sown for further development of the Scully abduction storyline. In fact, the writers



virtually ignored this important development during the remainder of the second season. Are they stringing viewers along? Are they disinterested in providing answers? The second season ended without resolution of the mystery, and, unrealistically, neither Mulder nor Scully seemed too interested in finding out more about what happened to her—until this storyline was suddenly dropped into the plot during the final episode of the season, “Anasazi.”

Conspiracies ‘R’ Us

The lack of resolution to Scully’s abduction was frustrating enough, but equally unnerving was the muddled conspiratorial aspects of the show. We expressed some qualms about these aspects in *WIP* 12 following the first season. During the second season, the conspiracy (or conspiracies?) was broadened, making this element of the show even more maddening. The show never delineated who was on what side and what the sides represented, and moreover, none of it seemed to hold to any internal consistency. Smoking Man was constantly undermining Mulder’s work. Twice he was an accomplice to Mulder’s near death (“F. Emasculata” and “Anasazi”), yet twice (“One Breath” and “Anasazi”) he claimed to be aiding or protecting Mulder. Mr. X wanted the X-Files reopened, and he provided Mulder with secret information, until such time as he stopped—for no apparent reason. Equally frustrating was Skinner, who alternately supported and attacked Mulder’s work. Smoking Man’s waffling can easily be explained—he lied when he claimed to like Mulder. But how to explain the other two? Apparently X and Smoking Man were on opposite sides—with Skinner in the middle. X and Skinner’s actions, unfortunately, seemed determined more by plot contrivances than characterization. Whichever would propel a particular story—X provides information to Mulder, or X withholds it—is what ruled the day, regardless of any internal consistency.

Because of this, it’s almost impossible to know whether certain recurring elements within the show are meaningful symbols or haphazard props—that is, whether the show has developed a meaningful and consistent iconography such as *Twin Peaks* and *The Prisoner*. For example—while we’re on the subject of the conspiratorial aspects—one of the debates on the *X-Files* newsgroup a while back was the constant use of framed photos of President Clinton and Attorney General Janet Reno in the background during scenes in Skinner’s office. Obviously, such photos would be appropriate in an FBI office (the attorney general heads the Justice Department, of which the FBI is one part). Some viewers thought, however, that the constant depiction was an example of the producers introducing partisan politics into

the show. This is a possibility, but in *XF*, the higher governmental authorities are not exactly portrayed in a positive light. In “The Erlenmeyer Flask,” it’s implied that the order to shut down the X-Files came from the President. This season revealed that the FBI contained warring factions agreeing or disagreeing with that decision. And, interestingly, one episode, “Our Town,” took place in Arkansas involving a powerful chicken producer. So perhaps the framed photos were actually subtle reminders of the questions that have been raised about Clinton’s dealings with Whitewater and Tyson Chicken and Reno’s Waco debacle. But which interpretation is legitimate? The problem with *The X-Files* is that because the producers don’t seem to have worked out a larger plan—or haven’t revealed it if they have—there’s no way to know whether individual elements can be given symbolic weight. Does a recurring photo of Clinton have any meaning at all? And how are viewers to know if they should even attempt to ask and answer such



Scully, Mulder, and Melissa in “the second season’s finest hour” (“One Breath”)

questions?

Conspiracies are supposed to be secretive, of course, but from a viewing standpoint, it helps to know what the various sides represent in order to care about the struggle and the outcome. So far, *The X-Files* conspiracy element has been anything but clear.

Investigating Extrem(ist) Possibilities

At least one aspect of the show, however, appeared to hold some thematic unity. “Sleepless” featured a man, Cole, who went by the nickname Preacher. As a soldier in Vietnam, he warned that there would be a judgment for the various atrocities his squad committed. He continued that role twenty-four years later, even going so far as to carry a Bible around as he killed various people he believed deserved such a fate. In contemporary pop culture stories, it’s virtually inevitable that Bible-quoters will be either New Agers in disguise or killers. (While such extremist wackos exist in real life, they’re the minority.) Our first thought was that *The X-Files* was simply

going along with the crowd. Then we realized—no, *XF* was indeed different, because in this series, *everyone* is an extremist.

Think about it. The Red Museum vegetarians in the tenth episode weren’t your run-of-the-mill meat-avoiders; these folks were downright obsessive. (Why else would they create their own vegetarian cult—and set it up in the heart of dairy country?) The WAO animal rights group in “Fearful Symmetry” wasn’t composed of simple be-kind-to-animal types, but crazies that only PETA could love. So far, the Lone Gunmen trio haven’t been interested in merely studying conspiracies as an intellectual pursuit—they’ve lost touch with reality. The various occult devotees that populated the second season never just dabbled in the arcane arts—they immersed themselves in the practices (even in “Die Hand Die Verletzt,” although not to the degree the “dark lord” demanded).

Such extremism extended to the main characters. The Smoking Man may be the best example—his penchant for secrecy and mystery that is emphasized by his constant hiding in shadows borders on parody. (The *real* shock of the final episode was when he stood in the middle of the desert in broad daylight; the viewer almost expected him to bring along his own cloud to provide shadows.) We learned in “One Breath” that he absolutely believed in what he was doing: “I’m in the game because I believe what I’m doing is right....If people were to know of the things that I know, it would all fall apart.” Mr. X was the epitome of the violent conspirator—the cloak-and-dagger Rambo to whom the only uncrossable boundary was sacrificing his

own life. And Mulder was, of course, not just mildly interested in UFO phenomena. Such pursuits controlled his life, career, and thinking. In real life, a man such as Mulder would clearly be needing serious help. And Scully—

It was initially tempting to pardon Scully from the charge of extremism. Couldn’t she have been (as Michael Ontkean referred to his Sheriff Truman character in *Twin Peaks*) the “designated driver” of the series, moderating the excesses around her? No. Her devotion to science was just as strong as Mulder’s dedication to the supernatural. Note the extents she would go to in order to explain (away) the strange things she kept encountering: werewolf fangs were calcium deposits; frogs were dropped from the sky by high winds; silicon-based life forms were an unthinkable impossibility. Scully appeared more moderate, only because science is a fairly acceptable object of obsession. Yet that should not be confused with the degree of fanaticism itself. (On the other hand, as the second season neared its end, Scully

Photo by Ken Staniforth; © 1994 Fox Broadcasting

began to propose crime solutions that would have been unthinkable for her character a year ago; note "Humbug" and "Our Town.")

Characters created in such extreme ways are difficult to make into believable people (few individuals are obsessively single-minded) and run the danger of being shallow or becoming parodies—almost certainly not the intent in *XF*. One of *XF*'s problems is creating characters of depth, and this tendency to make them so extreme may be one of the reasons.

Of course, these types of characters add to the show's unreal atmosphere. No one on this series seems quite authentic; the viewer has stepped into a strange, alternate earth (wild storylines aside) where the men and women don't really have lives, just obsessions. A possible debate may be whether this is superficial writing or carefully controlled subtlety.

Is It All Just an Act?

Despite the sometimes shallow writing for the characters, the acting on the show is another matter entirely. For the past couple of years, we have written very little about the acting on *The X-Files*. We have appreciated various performances by David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson, Brad Dourif, and Jerry Hardin, but on the whole we have concentrated on the stories. Now's the time to compensate.

This second season proved that Duchovny is an actor of considerable talent. Although he had less opportunity to reveal the offbeat humor so often present in the first season (remember "Mulderisms," a term not heard as much nowadays?), this year allowed him to prove his ability to portray a type of character we weren't sure he could—an intense, driven, no-nonsense individual. Again and again, Duchovny showed us skills we hadn't seen in him. In "Little Green Men," he revealed—not as much through dialogue, but through subtle body language—his emotional and psychological suffering by not having the X-File investigations as an outlet. "Duane Barry" gave him the opportunity to work with Steve Railsback, and the result was thespian dynamite. In "Ascension," we saw Mulder's pursuit up the mountain as a work of grim determination. Later, when he discovered Krycek's betrayal, Duchovny played the scene not in anger but—again with ever so subtle body language—in resignation, as if he would always be outmaneuvered by larger, more powerful forces. "One Breath" allowed Duchovny to take the character to the edge, and it was a performance critical to the success of this great episode.

This year's Emmy category for best dramatic actor is going to be a tough battle—how can voters possibly narrow down a list that includes deserving members from *Homicide*, *ER*, *NYPD Blue*, and *Chicago Hope*? But—unlike a year ago—it would not be inconceivable to find Duchovny's name on the final ballot.

Gillian Anderson's performance was more difficult to gauge this season. Her

pregnancy gave her limited action for the first eight episodes. Then, she didn't have a break-out role like last year's "Beyond the Sea." Nevertheless, "Irresistible" came close as she struggled to come to grips with her weaknesses in the present case and her ambivalence in expressing those shortcomings to Mulder. The final scene may have been Anderson's most powerful of the season as Mulder rescued Scully, and she's forced to confront him and her emotions—just after a fight that nearly killed her.

Unfortunately, too often Scully suffered from weak dialogue. Over and over, Anderson was forced to say, "But Mulder, that's impossible because..." blah blah blah, as if she were a broken record. One gets the sense that if Mulder presented any news to Scully about which she was unaware—a new detergent that made clothes fifty percent brighter—Scully's first words, before even a moment's thought, would be,



David Duchovny—"an actor of considerable talent"

"But Mulder, that's impossible because...."

This year, the supporting cast excelled in its limited role. Mitch Pileggi has created a fair amount of fan interest with his role as Asst. Director Walter Skinner, and it's easy to see why. Despite being given sometimes frustratingly vague dialogue (whether he was for Mulder and the X-Files or against them depended on the episode), Pileggi humanized a potentially cold character. His Vietnam speech in "One Breath" stood as his best moment in two seasons. Yet when he needed to be forceful (the elevator scene in "End Game" comes to mind) he showed that he was just as good with such material.

William B. Davis has been with the series since the pilot, and he's perfect as Smoking Man. While the writers and directors occasionally got too cute this season with shots of cigarettes in ashtrays and improbable shadows cutting across Davis's face, "One Breath" (again!) and "Anasazi"

showed that the actor deserves more screen time.

Steven Williams's Mr. X replaced Jerry Hardin's Deep Throat as Mulder's friend (or maybe not) in the government. We were sorry to see Hardin leave, but Williams was great in the new role, combining a beautiful, deep voice with a kind of enigmatic malevolence that's perfect for Mr. X.

Two guest stars from the season should be given special note. Steve Railsback turned in a riveting performance in "Duane Barry/Ascension" that should certainly be up for Emmy consideration. And, although brief, Don Davis's appearance as Scully's father in "One Breath" provided the season's most poetic scene.

Fox Mulder—the Ultimate X-File

So what lies ahead for the third season? In a December 3, 1994 online interview, then-co-executive producer Glen Morgan revealed that the *XF* team "didn't want the show to be a continuing serial. They work best as stand alone episodes." He also revealed that, at the time, there was no official "canon" for the series—that elements were incorporated into the series on a "very visceral" level: "You knew it was an X-File in your gut."

In that light, we don't expect a "big picture" to develop, except perhaps by accident as a result of the accumulation of individual episodes. Should we then even bother wondering, for instance, why Mulder is not fired from the FBI (or even killed by the rogue elements in the government who so effortlessly eliminate all other adversaries)? Or why the X-Files are not permanently shut down by high administration officials if the division poses such a threat? Or why the aliens abducted Samantha but not Mulder?

Probably not. But we wondered, anyway. For what it's worth, we came up with a way for everything to more or less make sense.

Mulder, himself, may be the ultimate X-File—not an "unexplained phenomenon," but the ultimate experiment of alien and government intelligence. Mulder must be something special. The government conspiracists refuse to kill him despite the trouble he's caused them. The various alien intelligences never harm him (only those around him). Instead, they treat him as if he were a pawn in an elaborate and immense chess game. But maybe he's more than a pawn. Perhaps Mulder is a crucial part of a greater scheme (or experiment) involving both alien and government forces (and Scully, too). This may help explain what drives Mulder to pursue the X-Files. It's more than just the abduction of Samantha; it's his subconscious need to know what is happening (or has happened) to him.

The first season suggested that the government knew about the UFOs but was intent on covering it up. The second season hinted that perhaps certain elements of the government (actually, several international governments) might be in some

Photo by Ken Staniforth; © 1994 Fox Broadcasting



Don Davis as Scully's father in "the season's most poetic scene" ("One Breath")

sort of alliance with the aliens. Why not play this out during the third season? Under this scenario, the key conflict would not be the survival of the X-Files division (it's illogical that such a program would arouse such intensity, anyway); even the existence of UFOs would take a back seat (might as well; by now, their reality is firmly established in the *XF* universe). No, under this plan, some warring factions within the government would be opposed to policies of alien entanglements, and some factions would be supportive, but probably all would be determined to keep the information from leaking out to the public. The resulting battle would be over control of this policy, the information it provides, and who controls that information.

The Episode Guide

We noted in *WIP* 12 that the first season suffered from too many duplicate plots. The second season began with a nice variety—monsters ("The Host"), serial killers ("Blood"), and vampires ("3"), for instance. But soon, the season broke down into two types of episodes, (1) alien visitors and (2) the occult.

Of course, UFO stories dominated the first season (at least six episodes), and the second was no different. "Little Green Men," "Duane Barry," "Ascension," "Colony," "End Game," "Fearful Symmetry," and "Anasazi" were all essentially alien/abduction stories; even "One Breath" fit into this category to some degree. And "Irresistible" managed to make a slight nod in this direction, tying in (barely) with "Colony/End Game" by having the morphing antagonist.

When Mulder and Scully weren't wrestling with cases involving extraterrestrials, they were battling occult religions. The first season had none of these stories, but the second made up for it with "Die Hand Die Verletzt," "Fresh Bones," "The Calusari," and "Our Town." Even "Red Museum" might be grouped in this category—the cult's primary bond was vegetarian-

ism, but the leader did allow himself to be used as the medium for a "walk-in" to communicate to his followers.

All told, then, these two types of stories made up around thirteen of the twenty-five second season episodes. On the other hand, several of the other episodes succeeded at presenting fairly original works. By far the quirkiest episode was "Humbug," and writer Darin Morgan deserves praise for giving viewers something completely off the beaten *XF* track. "Dod Kalm" was a nice twist on the Bermuda

Triangle motif and attained several scenes of poignancy. "Ascension" worked well as, among other things, an adventure/thriller. And "One Breath" took the series to new levels of depth, emotion, power, and thematic import.

Following is our episode-by-episode commentary on the second season. We've noted some aspects of each show that made the biggest impressions on us (positive and negative). As with our first season guide, we will *not* get bogged down in



The "enigmatically malevolent" Mr. X (Steven Williams) battles Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) in "End Game."

analyzing the accuracy of the science *per se*. We're not saying that scientific accuracy is unimportant in fiction, only that our expertise does not extend that far, and it would have been impractical to contact experts in each of the various fields for their analysis.

Thanks for reading, and let us hear from you.



SPECTRUM TELEVISION RATING SYSTEM

★★★★★ - The best that television has to offer, equal to the greatest art of other media; exceptional writing and acting; usually dynamic, innovative visuals. Examples: most episodes of *Twin Peaks* (hence our "donut" rating), *The Prisoner*, *I Claudius*, *The Simpsons* (come to think of it, donuts are applicable here, too!), *Homicide*, *Crime Story*, *The Civil War*, and *The Twilight Zone*.

★★★★ - Still great writing and acting, though perhaps not as innovative in the visuals. Examples: most episodes of *ER*, *All in the Family*, *Moonlighting*, *Hill Street Blues*, and *St. Elsewhere*.

★★★ - Enjoyable and entertaining, particularly to a fan of the genre of show that may fall into this category; worth taping and keeping, although the writing is sometimes only average. Examples: *Wild Palms*, the 60s *Batman*, and *Beverly Hills, 90210*.

★★ - Serious writing problems or acting deficiencies begin to affect enjoyment of the show, although engaging characters or intriguing concepts may keep viewers watching. Examples: *VR.5*, *Sledge Hammer*, and *Mork and Mindy*.

★ - Unwatchable; lacking any wit, originality, or visual flair. Examples: difficult, since these are the shows we can't get past the first five minutes; *Full House*, *Family Matters* (or virtually all TV sitcoms, for that matter); variety shows (or—even worse—variety "specials")

✖ - "Great bad": shows that are so bad, they're watchable; the television equivalent of Ed Wood Jr. films—the viewer can't believe the show actually made it on the air; an "Unwatchable" (one ★) show produced with conviction would probably fit into this category. Examples: *America's Funniest Home Videos* (et al.), *A Current Affair*, and all infomercials and daytime TV talk shows.

WRITER'S BLOCK - notes on writing or plot glitches that catch our attention. We're being kind and suggesting that a better solution simply didn't occur to the creative team (as opposed to their being incapable of better work). Below is our Writer's Block mascot, "The Cartoonist," courtesy Shannon Wheeler, *Too Much Coffee Man*.



The X-Files Episode Guide

Second Season Series Credits: Starring David Duchovny (Fox Mulder) and Gillian Anderson (Dana Scully); Created by Chris Carter (also Executive Producer); Mark Snow (Music); Joseph Patrick Finn (Line Producer, episodes 1-3; Producer, episodes 4-25); Paul Rabwin (Co-Producer); Paul Brown (Producer, episodes 1-9); David Nutter (Producer, Episodes 3-13); Rob Bowman (Producer, episodes 14-25); Kim Manners (Producer, Episodes 19-25); Howard Gordon (Supervising Producer); James Wong (Co-Executive Producer, episodes 1-14); Glen Morgan (Co-Executive Producer, episodes 1-14); R.W. Goodwin (Co-Executive Producer); John S. Bartley, C.S.C. (Director of Photography); Graeme Murray (Art Director); Stephen Mark (Editor, episodes 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22, 25); James Coblenz (Editor, episodes 2, 5, 8, 11, 14, 17, 20, 23); Heather MacDougall (Editor, episodes 3, 6, 9, 12, 15, 18, 21, 24).

1. LITTLE GREEN MEN

First televised September 16, 1994

Guest Starring Mitch Pileggi (Asst. Director Walter Skinner), Mike Gomez (Jorge), and Raymond J. Barry (Sen. Matheson); Co-Starring William B. Davis (Smoking Man), Les Carlson (Dr. Troisky), Marcus Turner (Young Mulder), Vanessa Morley (Samantha), and Fulvio Cecere (Aide); Featuring Deryl Hayes, Dwight McFee, Lisa Anne Belby, Gary Hetherington, and Bob Wilde; Written by Glen Morgan & James Wong; Directed by David Nutter.

Intro: The High Resolution Microwave Survey at the Arecibo Ionospheric Observatory (Arecibo, Puerto Rico)—shut down in 1993—receives a transmission. **Act 1:** Because the X-Files have been shut down ("The Erlenmeyer Flask," first season finale), Mulder is on a wiretap assignment at Longstreet Motel in Washington, D.C. Scully is teaching at the F.B.I. Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Mulder and Scully meet briefly in the parking garage of the Watergate Hotel. Later, he remembers November 27, 1973, Chilmark, Mass., 8:53 P.M.—his sister Samantha's abduction. Mulder meets with Sen. Matheson, a supporter of his work. Matheson tells Mulder to get to Arecibo quickly—before the Blue Beret UFO Retrieval Team does. **Act 2:** Mulder arrives at the Observatory in Arecibo and enters the locked building. Scully locates "TRUSTNO1" file on Mulder's computer—it provides a clue to his whereabouts. Mulder finds a man, Jorge, in the Observatory bathroom; in Spanish, the man tells Mulder what he saw and draws an alien-looking head on the wall. Later, Jorge panics and runs outside. Mulder follows and finds him dead leaning up against a tree, frozen in fear. **Act 3:** At the Miami International Airport, Scully is being followed, but she escapes and buys a ticket to San Juan. Back at the Observatory, the room shakes; the lights go off; the machines go haywire; there are bright lights outside; Mulder bars the door, but "They" open it anyway. Mulder's gun won't fire. **Act 4:** Scully finds Mulder unconscious. He thinks he has proof of "contact" because his recorder was running. The Blue Berets are on the way. He and Scully escape. Back in Skinner's office, Mulder is severely reprimanded as Smoking Man looks on. Then Mulder's upset that his phone was tapped. Skinner's upset at Smoking Man and throws him out. Later, Mulder and Scully listen to the tapes Mulder returned from Arecibo, but they've been erased, probably by an electrical storm.

COMMENTS: "Little Green Men" serves to introduce the concept of *The X-Files* to new viewers while reminding older viewers of Mulder's obsession to find out what really happened to his sister. The show starts with a narrated opening sequence in which Mulder describes the Voyager and SETI (Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence) projects. This narration serves to link real-world events with the fictional world of XF. Does extraterrestrial intelligence seem like science fiction? Well, the writers tell us, the United States has seriously—and publicly—addressed the issue in the past. It has sent a message into deep space (Voyager) and scanned the skies in hopes of intercepting extraterrestrial signals (SETI). Mulder is not the only one who believes.

The show skillfully links the concepts of Voyager and SETI into the rest of the episode. One of the basic themes of "Little Green Men" is communication. The first time we see Mulder in the episode, he is stuck on surveillance duty, listening to the incessant ramble of suspects on tape. Mulder seeks to communicate with alien beings, yet he struggles to communicate with Scully, whom he ignores in the hallway at work; with

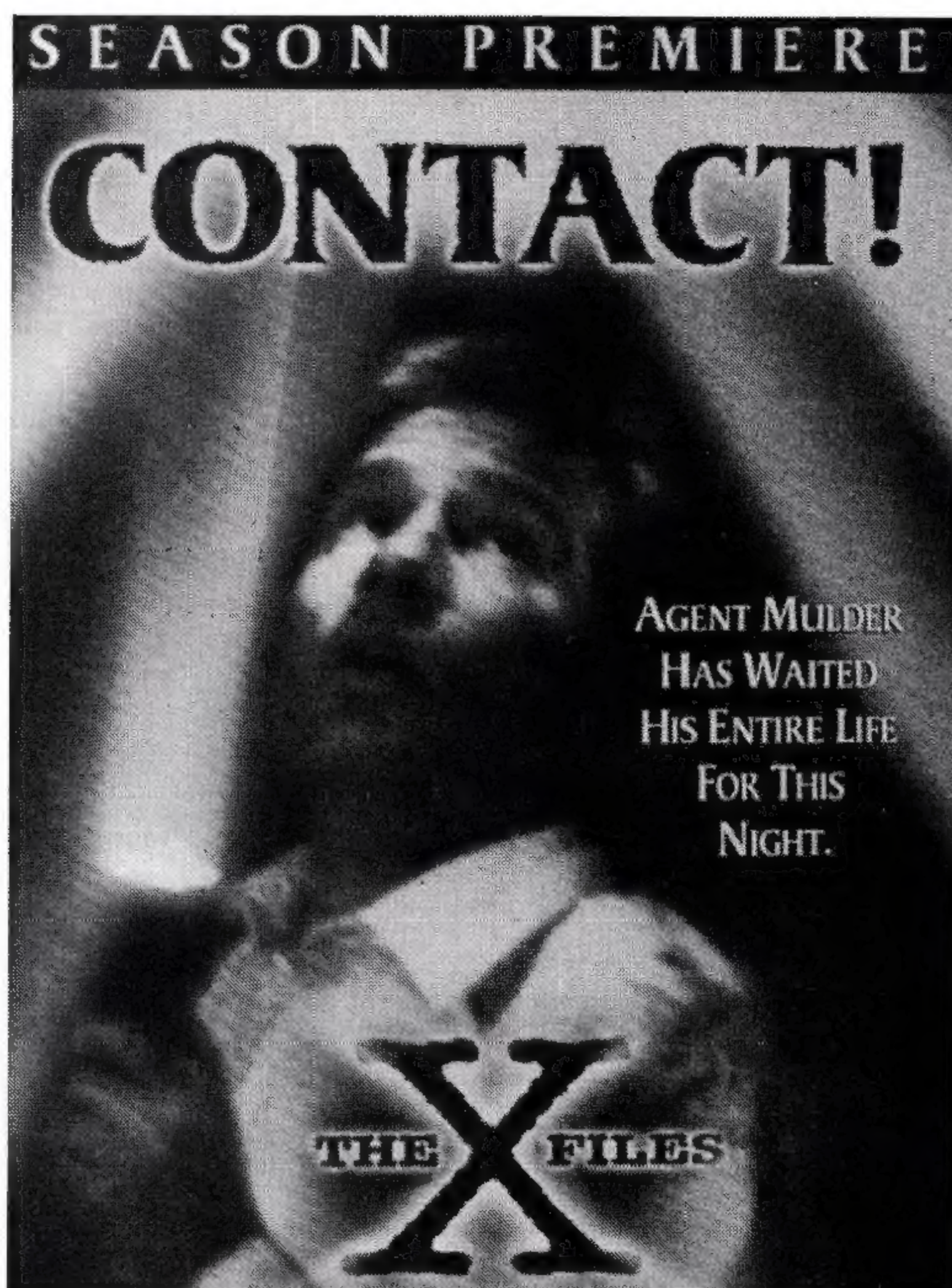
Jorge, who speaks an entirely different language; and ultimately, himself, as he begins to doubt his own memories and motivations. The episode ends with Mulder stationed at his surveillance post, still vainly trying to be heard, but also struggling to hear.

As mentioned in our introduction, Duchovny turns in a magnificent performance as a dazed man who has had his vehicle (the X-Files division) for getting him to his destination taken away, leaving him aimless until a new opportunity presents itself.

Unfortunately, after reintroducing viewers to Mulder's identity and role, fans eager to discover whether the second season would provide additional revelations of Mulder's search for Samantha were likely disappointed. "Little Green Men" reinforces the most frustrating aspects of the series—there are plenty of questions but few answers.

The episode suddenly introduces major new elements to the show with little or no set-up or follow-up. The existence of both Senator Matheson and the Blue Beret UFO Retrieval Team seem like important aspects of *The X-Files* universe. Yet they appear here for the first time and then never return. (Mulder does seek out Matheson's help in "Ascension," although he never actually meets with the Senator.) Mulder makes it clear that he knows Matheson well—that their relationship is more than just casual. "I've let you down," Mulder tells the Senator; "You've supported me at great risk." When has the Senator supported Mulder? Certainly not during the first season, since we've never seen or heard of him before. Mulder never mentions the Senator to Scully beyond a vague reference in the series pilot to his "connections in Congress." But "Little Green Men" makes it clear that Mulder has had a long-lasting and continual relationship with Matheson.

It's almost as if the show's writers decided to "redefine" certain elements of the series once they had the luxury of working on a successful (and therefore long-lasting) show. Nowhere is that more apparent than with Mulder's flashback "memory/dream" of his sister's abduction. The depiction of Samantha's abduction in "Little Green Men" differs greatly from




Mulder's description of the event in the series pilot. Why did the writers so carelessly tamper with the show's continuity? Could they simply have forgotten how Samantha supposedly disappeared? Not likely. More probably, the writers took advantage of *XF*'s new success and popularity. The creative team had the luxury to establish lengthy and extended subplots—and then “retrofit” them to the already existing *X-Files* universe. Hence a new version of Samantha's abduction. And the appearance of Senator Matheson. And the introduction of the Blue Beret UFO Retrieval Team. (The writers will again retrofit the show in a later episode—“One Breath”—when they give Scully a sister.)

“Little Green Men” is a solid episode, but structurally flawed. The show builds viewer expectations for the ultimate confrontation between Mulder and the alien(s). When it finally comes, however, the show cuts to a commercial, and the confrontation (if any) is lost. When the show returns, much time has passed, and Mulder is unconscious. When he awakens he is apparently unaware (or has forgotten) any contact he may have made. This is clearly the most frustrating aspect of the episode (and the series). How long will viewers endure being teased with questions before demanding the satisfaction of answers?

NOTES: Jorge's dialogue (in Spanish) tells how he saw lights in the sky. He went to investigate, and animal-like men grabbed him and put him in the observatory. And the airline passenger manifest contains some names *XF* fans may recognize, including Sylvia Bartle (of the *XF* fan club) and Charles Grant (writer of the *XF* novels).

WRITER'S BLOCK: (We've already discussed the inconsistent description of Samantha's abduction, the episode's most glaring problem.) Why do the aliens lock Jorge in the observatory? He obviously poses no threat. Mulder hikes through dense jungle to circumvent a fence surrounding the complex. Scully, however, finds a way to get herself, and her vehicle, through. The Blue Beret UFO Retrieval Team is supposed to be a crack commando squad—an elite force that is sent on critical missions. But somehow they are unable to stop two agents driving a rented jeep from getting away.

RATING: 

2. THE HOST

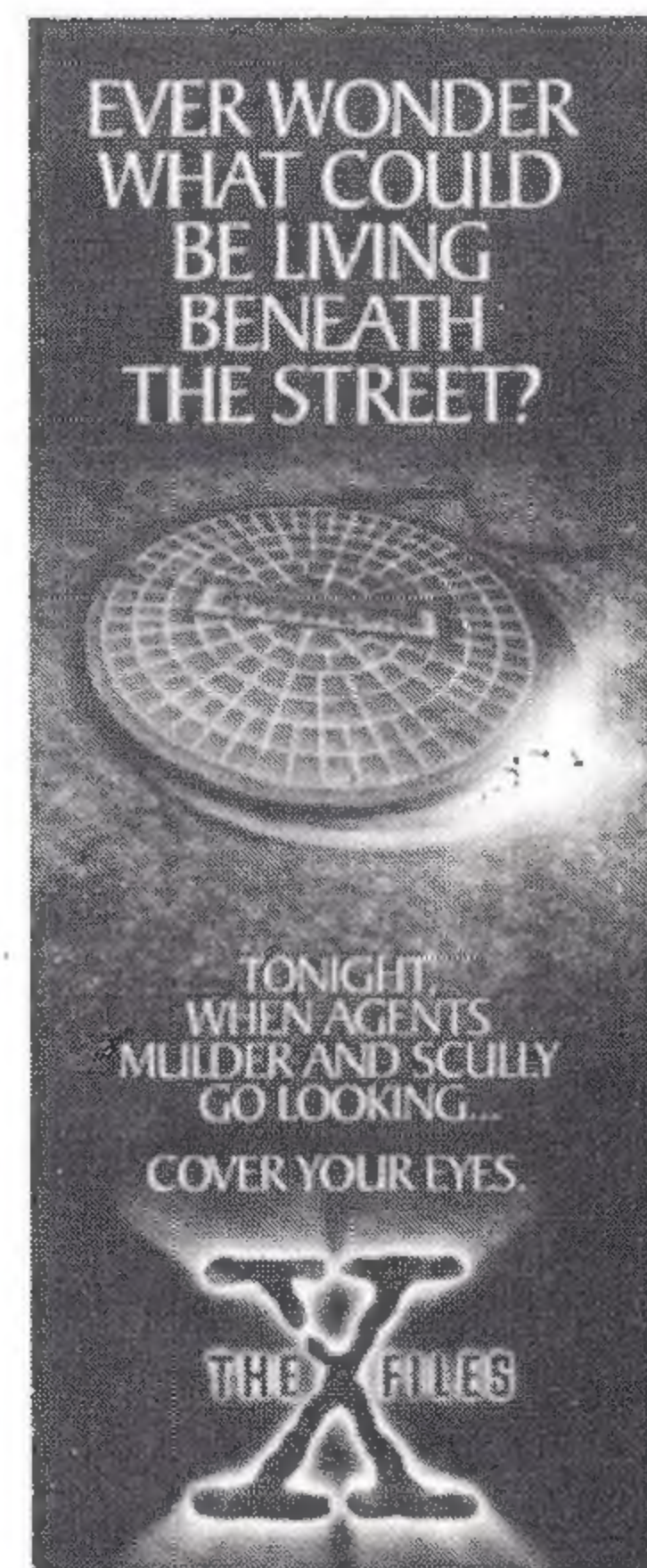
First televised September 23, 1994

Guest Starring Mitch Pileggi (Walter Skinner) and Darin Morgan (Flukeman); Co-Starring Matthew Bennett (Attacked workman), Freddy Andreiuci (Det. Norman), Don MacKay (Charlie), Marc Bauer (Agt. Brisentine), Gabrielle Rose (Dr. Zenzola), Ron Sauve (Foreman), Dmitri Boudrine (Russian Engineer), Raoul Ganee (Dmitri), and William MacDonald (Federal Marshall); Written by Chris Carter; Directed by Daniel Sackheim.

Intro: Two miles off the coast of New Jersey, toilets are backing up on a Russian ship. A repair is violently pulled into a septic tank. **Act 1:** Mulder is sent to Newark to investigate a decomposed body found in the sewers, but he doesn't want this assignment. He tells Scully he's thinking about

leaving the FBI. She performs the autopsy on his current case and finds a small worm-like thing squirming around inside the body. In Newark, a sanitation worker is attacked by something in the sewer; there's a strange mark on his back. **Act 2:** The worker thinks he was attacked by a snake. Mulder gets a mysterious call (that later turns out to be Mr. X): “I think you should know you have a friend at the FBI.” Scully shows Mulder a “flake” or “flatworm.” The sanitation worker, in the shower, “coughs up” a “flake,” and it disappears down the drain. At the Newark County Sewage Processing Plant, a worker thinks he sees a giant worm in the water. Later, Mulder sees a giant man/worm inside a tank. **Act 3:** Someone secretly provides Scully with a tabloid containing a story about a monster on a Russian cargo ship. At the Middlesex County Psychiatric Hospital, Mulder and Scully examine the man/worm. Later, Skinner tells Mulder the “monster” will be prosecuted because two people died—the sanitation worker was the second. Skinner admits that this would have been a good *X-File* case if the program still existed—“But we all take our orders from somewhere.” The man/worm fluke is being transferred to an institution for a full psychiatric evaluation by U.S. Marshals in an ambulance. At some point the driver notices the monster is apparently gone. He investigates and is attacked; the fluke escapes into a portable toilet. **Act 4:** The next morning, a tanker truck pumps out the toilet refuse, including the fluke. Mr. X calls Mulder: “I'll make this brief. Success in your current assignment is imperative.... Reinstatement of the *X-Files* must be undeniable.” At the county sewage processing plant, Mulder waits for the monster to appear—it will be trapped in the filters after the tanker dumps its load. Mulder and a worker investigate in an old section of the plant. The plant manager falls in and is attacked. Mulder tries to rescue him. The fluke tries to crawl through a pipe; Mulder uses the pipe door to crush the monster.

COMMENTS: “The Host” is the “Darkness Falls” equivalent of the second season—it is so poorly conceived, it's ludicrous. The episode is little better than a grade-B fifties science fiction film where a guy in a silly rubber



The X-Files Radio Commercials

A number of *X-Files* radio commercials aired during the second season. On the following pages are the ones we heard. All are one-minute spots that were combined with commercials for Fox's *M.A.N.T.I.S.* series that preceded *XF*. Generally, here was the breakdown: 5-second intro; approximately 20-second *M.A.N.T.I.S.* commercial; then approximately 25-second *XF* commercial; 5-second network announcement; and a 5-second local announcement.

Aired before the second season premiere:

Announcer: “On the unforgettable season premiere of *The X-Files*, the FBI has turned against them.”

Mulder: “We must assume we're being watched.”

Announcer: “The government is trying to kill them.”

Scully: “Mulder, we have to go! Evidence is worthless if you're dead!”

Mulder: “Help me!”

Announcer: “Now Agents Scully and Mulder are about to make their most startling discovery.”

Woman: “What you are looking at would have to be, by definition, extraterrestrial.”

Announcer: “Contact!”

SFX: whooshing sound

Mulder (screaming): “No!”

Announcer: “Prepare yourself for—*The X-Files*! Season premiere after an all-new *M.A.N.T.I.S.* Friday on Fox.”

Aired before “The Host”:

Announcer: “On an all-new *X-Files*, ever wonder what might be living beneath the streets?”

Man: “Help!”

Woman: “It was attacked by something down in the sewer.”

Announcer: “This Friday, Agents Mulder and Scully go looking.”

Scully: “This is amazing!”

Announcer: “And what they find—”

SFX: roar

Scully: “Oh gosh!”

Announcer: “—will terrify you.”

Mulder: “This is not a *man*; it's a monster!”

SFX: roar

SFX: man screaming

SFX: two gunshots

Announcer: “*The X-Files*, after *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, two all-new episodes Friday on Fox.”

monster suit runs around terrorizing citizens. Although the episode manages to convey an eerie and unsettling atmosphere (due to the show's effective use of light and shadows), both the premise and storyline are weak. And everybody acts stupidly, from Skinner's desire to prosecute to the Marshal's mode of transportation to Mulder's dive into the water at the end. But the episode's greatest weakness is the Flukeman. Writer Chris Carter is apparently unsure how to treat this "monster" (as described by Mulder). Scully describes it as having primate physiology, but Mulder notes that it has no sex organs. Clearly this thing is far from human, but once caught the Flukeman is placed in a psychiatric hospital! Skinner refers to the Flukeman as a suspect that must be prosecuted. This "suspect" lives in a sewer! How can the characters (or actors, for that matter) take any of this seriously? The Flukeman is a mutant life form. It is neither human nor animal, but rather some unnatural merging of the two. Yet the characters in the episode go about the business of catching and transporting this *man-sized worm* as if it were a common criminal. Ridiculous.

"The Host" introduces the character of Mr. X, although he is only heard in the episode. This early incarnation of Mr. X, however, does not seem to fit with his portrayal in later episodes. X tells Mulder he has a friend in the FBI. Later someone (probably X) gives Scully an important clue in the Flukeman mystery. Finally, X tells Mulder that his success on the Flukeman case is crucial to re-instatement of the X-Files by establishing the need for such a division. (Of course, the argument also works against him. If Mulder and Scully are successful, then the FBI manages to solve the case without the activated X-Files, thus establishing their superfluousness.)

The Mr. X character seems only partially conceived. In "The Host" he claims to be Mulder's friend and goes out of his way to help him, but in later episodes he attempts to discourage and prevent Mulder from investigating various phenomena. It seems likely that X was created as a simple plot device to replace the departed Deep Throat—a gimmick to keep storylines moving. Later in the season, when the X-Files writers are looking for plot twists, they apparently decide to make X less of an ally and more of an adversary.

WRITER'S BLOCK: Two armed US Marshals load the Flukeman into an ambulance for transport. Yet the ambulance has only one driver and no escort. Doesn't an unknown killer mutant species deserve a little more security? And where does he "disappear" to in the back of the small ambulance in Act 3? And since when would a sanitation worker want to take a cigarette break on a catwalk over sewage tanks?

RATING: ☹☹☹

3. BLOOD

First televised September 30, 1994

Guest Starring William Sanderson (Ed Funsch), John Cygan (Sheriff Spencer), Kimberly Ashlyn Gere (Bonnie McRoberts), and George Toulaitos (Larry Winter), Co-Starring Bruce Harwood (Byers), Dean Haglund (Langly), Tom Braidwood (Frohike), Gerry Rosseau (Mechanic), and Andre Daniels (Harry), Featuring William MacKenzie, Diana Stevan, David Fredericks, Kathleen Duborg, John Harris, and B.J. Harrison; Teleplay by Glen Morgan & James Wong; Story by Darin Morgan; Directed by David Nutter

Intro: At the Postal Center in Franklin, Pennsylvania, a worker, Ed Funsch, keeps seeing the words "kill", "kill 'em" and "kill 'em all" on his computer screen. **Act 1:** At the Civic Center, a man in an elevator thinks he sees "kill 'em all" messages on the digital display and murders his four fellow passengers with his bare hands. At an ATM machine, Funsch sees the message again. Mulder determines the single connecting link with the recent rash of murders: the destruction of an electronic device at the crime scene. Mrs. Roberts arrives at a garage to pick up her repaired car. On the diagnostic screen, she sees a message to kill the mechanic before he rapes and kills her; she does so. **Act 2:** Mulder and Sheriff Spencer visit Roberts. She sees a message on her microwave display and attacks Mulder; the Sheriff shoots her. Later, Mulder hides in a grove and gets "crop-dusted." **Act 3:** Mulder thinks that an experimental insecticide—LSDM—might be responsible for the killing spree—it increases already-existent phobias of people and allows them to pick up on subliminals placed in electronic devices—but by whom? Mr. Winter agrees to stop spraying and provide blood tests. Funsch doesn't want to be tested. He sees "kill kill kill" displayed on his watch and grabs his rifle. **Act 4:** He goes to the clock tower at the Franklin Community College and begins shooting. Mulder climbs the tower and subdues the man. Mulder calls Scully and sees on his phone, "All done! Bye bye!"

COMMENTS: A predictable but entertaining episode, "Blood" stands out for its strong supporting cast. In particular, William Sanderson (probably

best known for his role as Sebastian in *Blade Runner*) delivers a fine performance as the overwhelmed—and very frightened—Edward Funsch. The writers and director use an inventive technique to integrate Scully into the story. She is still separated from Mulder because of the current status of the X-Files division (and also because of Anderson's pregnancy). Both Scully and Mulder regularly read each other's notes as the current case progresses. The episode uses voice-over narration to make the two characters seemingly interact—almost as if they are in the same room. This technique effectively conveys Scully and Mulder's partnership—and their dependence on one another.

While the writing in the episode is strong, some silly O.J. Simpson references seem awkward and forced. The writers are deliberately incorporating the hype of the Simpson incident into an episode that doesn't need it. Funsch is confronted by scenes of violence on the television monitors: Charles Manson, the beating of Reginald Denny, the burning of the Branch Davidian Compound in Waco, Texas. But he also sees the famous footage of the slow-speed chase of the White Ford Bronco. This image hardly compares with the violence of the others, but because it was a hot topic at the time, the show's producers probably thought it would make a powerful impact. Instead it diminishes the impact of what Funsch sees—and feels.

WRITER'S BLOCK So were there messages or was it all imaginary? The only logical explanation is that the people were delusional because of the drug. And yet the final scene with Mulder implies someone really was controlling the messages—a story interpretation that makes the rest of the story extremely problematic.

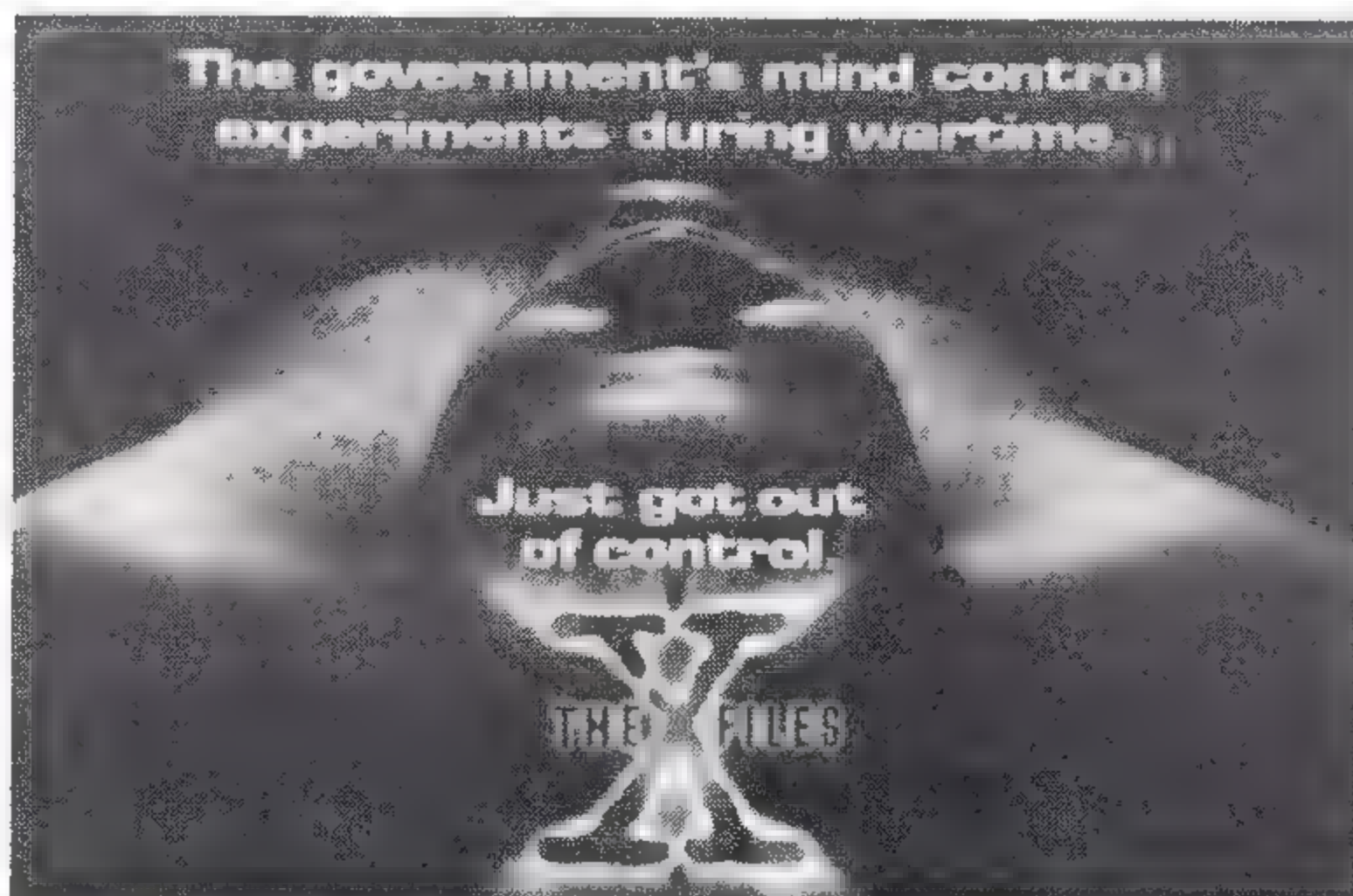
RATING: ☹☹☹

4. SLEEPLESS

First televised October 7, 1994

Guest Starring Mitch Pileggi (Walter Skinner), Nicholas Lea (Agent Alex Krycek), Jonathan Gries (Sal Matola), Steven Williams (Mr. X), and Tony Todd (Cole), Co-Starring Don Thompson (Henry Willig), David Adams (Dr. Girardi), Michael Puttonen (Dr. Pusson), Anna Hagan (Dr. Charyn), William B. Davis (Smoking Man), Mitch Kosterman (Det. Morton), Paul Bittante (Team Leader), and Claude De Martino (Dr. Grissom), Written by Howard Gordon; Directed by Rob Bowman.

Intro: In New York City, a doctor (Grissom) specializing in sleep disorders wakes to find his apartment on fire. He calls the fire department; they arrive to find the man dead beside a fire extinguisher, but no fire. **Act 1:** Mulder obtains (from Mr. X?) an audio cassette tape of the 911 tape. Mulder wants to investigate, but the case already belongs to Alex Krycek, so Mulder (reluctantly) agrees to accompany him. Scully says it's as if Grissom's body believed it was burning. In Brooklyn, Henry Willig watches TV. Augustus Cole enters. A group of Vietnamese suddenly appear and shoot Willig. **Act 2:** Willig's cause of death appears to be "internal" bullet wounds. Willig received Marine training on Paris Island, where Grissom was stationed at the time; then Willig went to Vietnam. Mulder and Krycek try to visit Cole, who was in Willig's squad, but he was accidentally discharged two days ago from the V.A. Medical Center. Mr. X provides Mulder with information about the Paris Island sleep eradication experiments—Cole hasn't slept in twenty-four years. Unlike Deep Throat, X is not willing to sacrifice his life in pursuit of the truth. Closing down the X-Files was just the beginning—Mulder's never been in greater danger. **Act 3:** Mulder thinks Cole is somehow projecting his unconscious; he has built a bridge between the



waking and dream worlds—the collective unconscious; maybe he can project his dreams and thereby alter reality. Mulder and Krycek visit Sal Matola, the last survivor from Willig's squad. He tells them about the twenty-four-hour patrols. The entire squadron went AWOL and designed their own missions, including slaughtering a school full of children. Cole was known as Preacher because he said there would be a judgment day where they would have to pay for what they were did. Grissom and Dr. Francis Girardi were responsible for the surgeries that eliminated sleep. Girardi is scheduled to arrive in New York that night. Mulder spots him getting off the subway, but Cole shoots Girardi, then Mulder. **Act 4:** Krycek "awakens" Mulder and tells him Girardi was never there. Mulder insists he saw Girardi. Cole has kidnapped Girardi. Mulder and Krycek arrive and find Girardi, barely alive, in the station's freight warehouse. Krycek ends up shooting Cole. Later, Krycek meets with Smoking Man and two others—they're disturbed that Mulder has found another source, or another source has found him. They also realize that Scully's a larger problem than they believed.


COMMENTS: "Sleepless" is a tightly-written, well-plotted story. The episode is also nicely conceived. So many real-world examples of covert government operations in Vietnam have popped up in the media in recent years that it is surprising *The X-Files* took so long to base a story on such possibilities. Potential military experiments on soldiers serving during the Vietnam War fits nicely with the over-all premise of the show. Preacher is also a great antagonist. He is a tortured individual with a single purpose in mind. Once his mission is accomplished, he is willing to die to put himself out of his misery.

The episode is filled with nice subtleties. When we first see Willig he is watching late night television and yawning. We don't know that he hasn't slept in twenty-four years, but we do know that he is very tired. Mulder can barely contain his enthusiasm to be working on what he perceives is a genuine case of supernatural phenomena. Scully shows a tinge of jealousy when she finds out about Krycek. Later, Mulder and Scully's conversation on the phone allows both characters to acknowledge their deep friendship. Finally, Mulder uses his George Hale identity again to signal Scully he's calling. (He used it for the first time in "Little Green Men.")

The show is also beautifully directed. This is director Rob Bowman's second time directing an episode (he was behind the stylish, though ill-conceived, "Genderbender" from the first season). Bowman has a flair for dramatic, cinematic camera movements. The camera twists and tracks down the corridor of the institute where Cole is being kept; it slowly encompasses the huge storage facility where Mulder first meets Mr. X; and it swoops down from Cole's vantage point to reveal an iron stake jutting up from the ground—Cole's likely suicide instrument. This episode is visually quite wonderful.

"Sleepless" shows Mr. X on-screen for the first time, though once again his motivations seem poorly defined. Only a few episodes ago he claimed to be Mulder's friend and freely provided information. He does the same at the beginning of "Sleepless," but when he meets with Mulder he claims he "doesn't want to be here." Then why is he? If he is so frightened, then why involve himself with Mulder? This question is never satisfactorily answered. Mr. X's motives are supposed to be vague to Mulder, but unfortunately they don't seem at all consistent to the audience.

WRITER'S BLOCK Mr. X says that Mulder's "never been in greater danger"—finding out about a *sleep deprivation experiment*?!!? More critical than the Erlenmeyer Flask case? This is silly—an attempt at artificial suspense.

RATING: 

5. DUANE BARRY

First televised October 14, 1994

Guest Starring Steve Railsback (Duane Barry), Nicholas Lea (Agent Krycek), and CCH Pounder (Agent Kazdin); Co-Starring Stephen E. Miller (Tactical Commander), Frank C. Turner (Dr. Hakkie), Fred Henderson (Agent Rich), Barbara Pollard (Gwen), and Sarah Strange (Kimberly), Featuring Robert Lewis, Michael Dobson, Tosca Baggoo, Tim Dixon, Prince Maryland, and John Sampson; Written and Directed by Chris Carter.

Intro: In Pulaski, Virginia, June 3, 1985, aliens experiment on Duane Barry.

Act 1: Nine years later at the Davis Correctional Treatment Center in Marion, Virginia, Duane escapes. He goes to a travel agency and ends up taking Dr. Hakkie and three agency employees hostage. He wants passage for him and the doctor to an alien abduction site that he can't remember the location of. The negotiators want Mulder to be a friend to Duane, someone

who appears to understand him and can appeal to his sense of reason. Mulder realized Duane is a former FBI agent. **Act 2:** Duane shoots one hostage; Mulder trades himself for the victim. Duane says the aliens drilled holes in his teeth while aboard the ship. **Act 3:** Scully learns that Duane had been shot in the head in the line of duty; she thinks he's become a pathological liar who has completely fooled Mulder. Scully tells Mulder not to trust Duane. Duane lets the other travel agency hostages go free. Sharpshooters hit Duane. **Act 4:** At the hospital, FBI Agent Kazdin tells Mulder X-rays revealed small holes drilled in his teeth that are impossible with current technology. They also extracted a strange piece of metal from his stomach. Scully has the metal tested; they see strange, very small etchings in the piece. On a store register, Scully scans the small piece of metal; the register goes crazy. At the hospital, the aliens come for Duane. He overpowers the guard and escapes. He goes to Scully's apartment and kidnaps her.


COMMENTS: "Duane Barry" is the first part of a two-part episode (and the first part of a multi-episode storyline involving Scully's disappearance). Railsback, best known for *The Stunt Man*, turns in a powerful performance, one of the best of the series. The Duchovny/Railsback scenes of the negotiations, particularly while Mulder is hostage, are powerfully acted by both men. This is, at its core, another silly UFO abduction story, but the strong performances override the material. And Carter has provided enough interesting elements along the way (such as making Duane a former FBI agent) to keep the audience hooked.

The episode is engaging and fun to watch but suffers from a minor structural problem. The ending seems forced, as if a cliffhanger was tacked on in order to carry the story into another episode. The plot involving Duane Barry and the hostage situation is resolved by the end of Act 3, and the final fifteen minutes seem more like a prologue for "Ascension" than epilogue to "Duane Barry." On the other hand, Barry's kidnapping of Scully does provide an interesting parallelism with the following episode, where the Scully's victimization is repeated by whatever mysterious forces abducted her again.

Some plot elements are poorly explained, however. Mulder is called to help with a hostage situation because he has some knowledge of UFO abductions. But the hostage negotiators (particularly Agent Kazdin) believe that Duane Barry is "a psycho," that his UFO stories are the ramblings of a delusional mind. If they really believe Barry to be mentally ill, why bring in Mulder? What special skill or knowledge does he have to help diffuse the hostage situation? Ironically, Mulder asks the same question, but neither he, nor the viewer, gets a satisfactory answer. Mulder seems to forget the illogic of his presence as the episode progresses. When he volunteers to make one-on-one contact with Duane Barry, Mulder is told "not to jump into Barry's delusion" because he won't be able to "negotiate if Barry thinks Mulder believes him." Again the question arises: if Barry is not to be believed then why use Mulder? The episode fails to explain this crucial plot point.

Of course Mulder believes Barry, but when Scully arrives to tell him that Barry is a pathological liar who suffers from severe delusions, he doesn't believe her. Later evidence indicates that Barry was probably telling the truth about being abducted. So how did Scully, an accomplished agent, prove to be so totally wrong? Was she deliberately misled? If not, then her credibility is severely undermined.

It seems clear that Carter is toying with the audience in order to accentuate Mulder's potential danger. The audience is first led to believe that Barry is telling the truth. Mulder must fight the disbelievers in order to gain access to Barry and learn the truth himself. But later a contrived plot twist has Scully telling Mulder that Barry is a threat. Unfortunately this gimmick makes the story more confusing rather than more intense. (Carter is guilty of other gimmicks. The power outage that ends Act 1 is accompanied by a blinding white light—the trademark sign of a nearby UFO. The true source of this light is never adequately explained. In retrospect we see that the light was merely a dramatic scene on which to end the act.)

RATING: 

6. ASCENSION (DUANE BARRY PART 2)

First televised October 21, 1994

Guest Starring Steve Railsback (Duane Barry), Mitch Pileggi (Walter Skinner), Nicholas Lea (Agent Krycek), Sheila Larken (Margaret Scully), and Steven Williams (Mr. X); Co-Starring Meredith Bain Woodard (Dr. Ruth Slaughter), William B. Davis (Smoking man), Michael David Simms (FBI Agent), Peter LaCroix (Tram Watchman Dwight), Steve Makaj (Highway Patrolman), Peter Lapres (Video Technician), and Bobby L. Stewart



Mulder hangs onto the tram for dear life in "Ascension"

(Deputy), Written by Paul Brown, Directed by Michael Lange

Intro: Mulder and the police search Scully's apartment. Margaret Scully, Dana's mother, arrives. **Act 1:** Skinner meets with Mulder, Krycek, and Smoking Man to discuss Scully's disappearance. Mulder suggests the piece of metal she had might have been a tracking device. On Route 229 in Rixeyville, Virginia, Duane drives; Scully is in the trunk. He's stopped by police; he shoots the officer. Mulder studies the police car video and sees Scully when Duane opens the trunk. Mulder determines Duane is headed to Skyland Mountain. Mulder and Krycek leave, but first Krycek tells Smoking Man where they're going and says, "I'll hold him off until they locate her." **Act 2:** Mulder and Krycek arrive at Skyland; to save time, Mulder takes the tram up the mountain. Krycek knocks out the tram operator and shuts off the power just before Mulder reaches the top. He climbs on top of the tram; Krycek restarts power, and Mulder is almost thrown off. Mulder finds Duane's empty car. Soon, a bright light overhead appears from a helicopter. Duane is shouting that "They" took Scully instead of him this time. **Act 3:** Mulder questions Duane, now in custody. Mulder has a "vision" of Scully's being tested and mechanically impregnated by the aliens. Mulder finds Krycek talking with Duane and tells him to stay away. Duane gags and dies. **Act 4:** Military pathologist refuses to let Mulder see Duane's autopsy and toxicology reports. Krycek meets with Smoking Man. They can't kill Mulder without risking turning one man's obsession into a crusade. And Scully? "We've taken care of that," says Smoking Man. Skinner suspects Mulder of choking Duane. Mulder thinks Duane was poisoned; the military is covering up the Navy's toxicology report because they know where Scully is. On his way to see Sen. Matheson, Mr. X stops Mulder: "There's nothing the Senator can do for you now; no one can help you now." Mulder notices cigarette butts in non-smoker Krycek's car. Skinner reviews Mulder's report accusing Krycek of being hired by an outside agent to impede a federal

investigation and kill Duane. Mulder also thinks Krycek revealed Scully's location to Smoking Man's employers because Scully got too close to the truth with the metal implant. Skinner didn't give Krycek the assignment and doesn't know much about the man. Plus, Krycek didn't show up for work this morning, and his home number's been disconnected. Mulder asks what Skinner can do about it. Skinner reopens the X-Files because "that's what they fear the most."

COMMENTS: "Ascension" is a thrilling, satisfying episode that, despite its unresolved ending, illustrates the strong emotional bond between Scully and Mulder. (This bond will best be depicted two episodes from now, in "One Breath.") The show starts with a bang as Mulder hears Scully's cries for help and realizes that she has been violently kidnapped (or worse). Remarkably, the show continues to build momentum as Mulder relentlessly pursues Duane Barry. The show's expert camera work and precise editing perfectly convey Mulder's obsessive determination to rescue Scully. During the sky tram scene, for example, Mulder's impatience, the tram's dangerous speeds, and Krycek's double-cross are all integrated into a breathtaking and intense sequence.

David Duchovny turns in an outstanding performance as a frightened and driven Mulder. At the show's start he provides the perfect expression of fear, anger, and determination as Mulder first hears Scully's pleas for help. Duchovny takes Mulder over the edge as he brutally "interrogates" Duane Barry. Later, he shows Mulder struggling to keep his anger in check when confronting Mr. X. Finally, Duchovny conveys a numbed state of acceptance as Mulder meets with Mrs. Scully to tell her that Scully has not been found. Duchovny's performance implicitly reminds us that Scully is the second person Mulder has lost to unknown forces.

Although Mulder undergoes severe emotional strain in the episode, Duchovny still manages a few scenes of subtlety. Mulder's discovery of Krycek's true nature is restrained and almost sad, as if he is aware of the magnitude of the forces swirling about him and is resigned to them.

We haven't written much about Mark Snow's music in the series. Although it is attracting much fan attention, it's rarely made much of an impression on us one way or the other (outside of the theme song, which is pretty cool)—until this episode. Maybe we are just starting to pay more attention to the music now with all of the publicity it's received, but the intro—with Mulder rushing to Scully's apartment and searching for clues—contains a wonderfully effective use of drums and piano that heightens the impact of the scene.

While almost every aspect of "Ascension" works, there's still that nagging question of Mr. X's true motivations. Where once he proclaimed to be Mulder's friend and provided information unsolicited, now he refuses to help. We are never told exactly why.

A bit of irony: Scully's banging on the trunk distracts the Trooper so that Duane Barry can shoot him. If she hadn't interfered she might have been rescued!

NOTES: The opening credits read "Deny Everything" instead of the usual "The Truth Is Out There." The song playing on Duane Barry's car radio is "Red Right Hand" by Nick Cave and The Bad Seeds.

WRITER'S BLOCK: Duane Barry seems remarkably fit for someone who was shot in the chest and almost didn't survive. Why doesn't Mulder (or anyone else in the FBI) know who "Cancer Man" is? He attends meetings and is always loitering in Skinner's office. Doesn't anyone question his existence? Mulder hints that "Cancer Man" is part of some covert force. Why, then, is he openly tolerated? Just as importantly, in Act 3 the writer carefully "frames" the alien testing on Scully so that the show can finagle out of the clear implications by later claiming that it was only Mulder's imagination. Finally, how much does Krycek know in the grand scheme of things? As powerful and deadly as the conspirators seem to be, either (a) many people are in on it, meaning it's bound to leak out, or (b) most of the "foot soldiers" are in the dark—so why are they so willing to commit heinous deeds? What's in it for them?

RATING: ○○○○○

7. 3

First televised November 4, 1994

Guest Starring Justina Vail (*The Unholy Spirit*), Perrey Reeves (*Kristen Kilar*), and Frank Military (*The Son/John*), Co-Starring Tom McBeath (*Detective Gwynn/Det. Munson*), Malcolm Stewart (*Commander Carver*), Frank Ferrucci (*Detective Nettles*), and Ken Kramer (*Dr. Browning*); Featuring Richard Yee, Gustavo Moreno, John Tierney, and David Livingstone, Written by Chris Ruppenthal and Glen Morgan & James Wong; Directed by David Nutter.

Intro: Vampires attack a man in Hollywood Hills, California. **Act 1:** Mulder re-enters his office, which has been wrapped in plastic, and turns the calendar from May to November. He files the Scully case, now an X-File, in the cabinet. Mulder investigates the California man's death. The victim's blood on his wall writes out "John 52:54," which Mulder quotes as "He who eats of my flesh and drinks of my blood shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day." Mulder thinks the killers perceive themselves as an unholy trinity. The killers are out for blood (literally). Mulder visits the Hollywood Blood bank and finds a man—the "Son"—in the basement eating blood. He tells Mulder he'll live forever. Later, when sun hits him, he "melts." **Act 2:** The "Son" died from "burns." At Club Tepes, Mulder meets Kristen; he thinks she might be a vampire. **Act 3:** Mulder and L.A. police search Kristen's home. They find needles and bread filled with blood. Later, Kristen returns home. Mulder's waiting for her. She first tasted blood as a young girl; then later with John (the "Son"), until one night he brought two others with him and it turned "unnatural." Mulder stays with her. **Act 4:** John sneaks into Kristen's house and tells her that it's true—he will live forever (unless killed by another vampire). He wants her to kill Mulder and drink "the blood of his spirit"—the blood of one who believes—so she'll live forever. She refuses. John attacks Mulder but is overpowered. Mulder and Kristen try to escape, but the female vampire, "The Unholy Spirit," attacks. Kristen runs over the vampire then drives away. Later she returns to her house. She tastes the blood of a believer (apparently Mulder's), then takes a life—her own—to become a vampire. She burns up her house, herself, and her fellow vampires.

COMMENTS: "3" is a moody, modern, Gothic tale of vampires. The most surprising thing about the episode is that the vampire story actually makes sense! The seemingly convoluted logistics of these pseudo-vampires have their own internal consistency, and by episode's end the pieces all fall into place. The episode presents an original and fascinating twist on vampire legends—to become a vampire you must drink the blood of a believer and then take a human life.

However, the episode does have logistical problems. This is Mulder's first official X-File case since the reinstatement of the X-Files division. He claims to have followed the case for some time but does not believe the killers are actually vampires. (Mulder dismisses vampires as myth.) He claims that John, his captured suspect, is delusional. Mulder is clearly treating the case as if there is nothing supernatural involved. Once John is killed by sunlight, however, Mulder changes his tune. But if Mulder does not believe there is a supernatural aspect to the case, why is he investigating it? Although the episode does not explicitly state that the case is an X-File, the implication is still there—after all, Mulder has followed the case for months—and the X-Files division *has* just reopened.

Mulder's motivation for the investigation is vague, as are his reasons



Mulder meets Krysten (Perry Reeves) at Club Tepes ("3")

for not turning Kristen in to the police. By turning the police away, Mulder jeopardizes the whole investigation. Granted, he suspects that Kristen may be innocent, but his disregard for procedure ends up threatening his life and Kristen's.

The episode has a number of nice stylistic touches. The night shots of the canyon fires look remarkably like oozing blood, and there is effective use of red lighting—both techniques add to the episode's vampiric atmosphere. In addition, Club Tepes actually contains a mural of Vlad Tepes (the "real" Dracula). Unfortunately the episode resorts to cliché when Kristen shaves Mulder. How many vampire films depict a protagonist being shaved by someone else, then getting cut? "3" did not need to resort to this tired old trick (even setting aside the whole implausibility of Mulder's spending the night with her).

WRITER'S BLOCK: When Mulder re-opens the X-Files office he turns the calendar from May to November (presumably from the month the division was shut down to the current month). The episode, "Duane Barry," however, takes place in August. Did Mulder take a three-month vacation? And if so, has Scully been gone that long? And Mulder's knowledge of the Bible is no better than the "big-haired preachers" he ridicules. There is no 52nd chapter of John—not even close (the book goes only to 21). Yet he accurately quotes John 6:54. No reason within the story is given for this discrepancy, yet it's hard to imagine such a big blunder from the show's production team. Finally, how does one's beliefs affect one's blood makeup? Does it happen instantaneously—a kind of transubstantiation?

RATING: ○○○

8 ONE BREATH

First televised November 11, 1994

Guest Starring Sheila Larken (Margaret Scully), Melinda McGraw (Melissa Scully), Mitch Pileggi (Walter Skinner), Steven Williams (Mr. X), William B. Davis (Smoking Man), and Don Davis (William Scully), Co-Starring Jay Brazeau (Dr. Daly), Nicola Cavendish (Nurse Owens), and Lorena Gale (Nurse Wilkins) Featuring Bruce Harwood (Byers), Dean Haglund (Langly), Tom Braidwood (Frohike), Ryan Michael, and Tegan Moss (Young Dana Scully). Written by Glen Morgan & James Wong, Directed by R.W. Goodwin

Intro: Margaret Scully and Mulder pick up Dana's gravestone. **Act 1:** Dana Scully mysteriously appears at the Northeast Georgetown Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Scully is in a coma. Mulder, Margaret, and Melissa—Scully's crystal-power, New Age sister—visit. Scully has a dream or vision of being in a boat on a lake; Nurse Owens is on the shore. Frohike sneaks out Scully's toxicological report. It's analyzed by The Lone Gunmen: branch DNA is infecting her body; her immune system has been decimated. **Act 2:** Nurse Owens talks with Scully "to help her find a way home." Owens



leaves as Mulder arrives. Nurse Wilkins takes a blood sample, which is immediately stolen. Mulder chases the guy to the basement but finds only Mr. X, who tells Mulder to discontinue looking for Scully's captors—not a good idea. X says Mulder is X's tool, not the other way around. X used to be Mulder, where Mulder is, but Mulder may not have the heart to do what is necessary. They catch the man who stole Scully's blood; X kills him. **Act 3:** Skinner asks Mulder about the dead body/hospital incident. Mulder denies everything, giving Skinner a taste of his own medicine. Mulder wants to know where "Cancer Man" is. Scully's father visits her in a "dream." When he thought he'd never see her again, "My life felt as if it had been the length of one breath, one heartbeat." He never told her how much he loved her.

They'll be together again—not now, but soon. Mulder obtains Smoking Man's address. He confronts Smoking Man, who's "in the game because he believes what he's doing is right. ... If people were to know of the things that I know, it would all fall apart.... You can kill me now, but you'll never know the truth." Mulder relaxes. Smoking Man. "That's why I'll win." He admits to returning Scully to Mulder because he likes them. Mulder writes his resignation notice to Skinner. **Act 4:** Mulder packs in his office. Skinner visits and tears up Mulder's resignation letter. Skinner tells how in Vietnam he killed a young boy and lost his faith in "everything"—he concluded there was no point to anything. Later, he went through a near-death experience but now is afraid to look any further, but Mulder isn't. Mr. X alerts Mulder that the men responsible for Scully will come to his apartment tonight. Mulder should be ready to use "terminal intensity;" the law will not punish these people. But that evening, Melissa tells Mulder that Scully is weakening. He visits her in the hospital. He returns to his apartment, it's been trashed. Mulder cries, drops down, and lifts his hands, prayer-like. At the hospital, Scully comes out of her coma. Mulder visits her; she doesn't remember anything. Later, Scully asks about Owens, but there's no Owens working at the hospital.

COMMENTS: "One Breath" stands out as the season's best episode and contends with last season's "Beyond the Sea" as the best episode of the entire series. We've already written extensively about "One Breath" in *Wrapped in Plastic 14* but think additional comments are in order.

"One Breath" is better than most other episodes because of the addition of two elements: profound thematic content and depth of characters, and often these two are intertwined here.

UFO abductions and alien presences on the earth do not count as



Photo by Ken Staniforth. © 1994 Fox Broadcasting



serious great themes, unlike responsibility, guilt, purpose, ethics, and the power of faith. These are just a few of the issues dealt with here, giving the episode a rare fullness and multi-layered texture. This allows the show actually to improve with each viewing.

Partly because of these themes, the characters become more real. Much, if not most, of television—XF included—treats characters almost as props. Each will have his assigned role for a particular plot sequence. For comedies, this may not be a major problem, but for dramas, it flattens out the characters, making them less believable. What, for instance, are Columbo's political or religious beliefs? We don't know, because they're never needed for the story at hand. This works well for creating good

mysteries, but the character is more a plot contrivance and collection of idiosyncrasies than a believable, fully-developed human being.

"One Breath" breaks out of generic TV characterization by letting the viewer see a little more what makes Mulder, Skinner, and Smoking Man tick—their passions, their beliefs, their goals. (In our *WIP3* interview with Bryce Zabel, he said, "You always ask yourself about a character, 'What does he want?'" Too often, this is unclear in XF, to the detriment of making the characters believable.) Skinner's "Vietnam speech" may be his best moment in two seasons, because he

becomes human. Mulder is run through the gamut of emotions, and so becomes less the wisecracking "quack" or UFO know-it-all than a person having to confront real emotions after being pushed to the wall (literally, psychologically, ethically, and emotionally).

Yet "One Breath" does more than analyze individual characters; it tackles the even tougher challenge of looking at those various characters' relationships to each other. The episode concentrates on Mulder and his feelings for Scully. Previous episodes have shown how deeply he cares for her, but "One Breath" shows just how important Scully is to him—he forfeits an opportunity to discover some of the government's greatest secrets to be by Scully's bedside. This episode, more than most others, helps define the Mulder/Scully relationship. (We even learn that Mulder witnessed Scully's living will.) Since we know that they will not become romantically involved, their relationship is becoming one of brother and sister. In fact, Mulder seems to value Scully as much as he does Samantha. To Mulder, Scully may be a "surrogate sister"—someone he cannot bear to lose again.

Mulder's character is best defined by the interactions he has with other characters in the story. We've stated that Mulder sees reflections of himself in Mr. X, who is a sort of "dark Mulder," willing to kill for his cause—a Mulder-without-scruples. Yet Mr. X is but one reflection of what Mulder might become. Skinner is another. Here is a man who feels strongly supportive of the U.S. government, but who wishes he could believe in something more. It's clear that Skinner actually envies Mulder and here represents a Mulder-without-faith. Mulder also sees reflections of himself in Melissa Scully—a New Age believer who seems to have blind faith in the unexplainable (a Mulder-without-science), and The Lone Gunmen—outsiders who refuse to believe what the government tells them (a Mulder-disengaged-from-the-system-entirely). Mulder encounters each of these characters through the course of the story as he searches to discover who he really is and in what he really believes. In the end he finds out: he believes in his relationship with Scully.

Everything comes together in "One Breath." The episode is beautifully filmed, well-written, and well-acted. Even the music is especially effective this episode, particularly in the first act. What makes "One Breath" such a rare gem, however, is the attention to little details. The brief dialogue (from which the episode's title is derived) by Scully's father is sheer poetry, aided by Don Davis's masterful delivery:

Hello Starbuck. It's Ahab.

People would say to me.

"Life is short"

Kids, they grow up fast.
 Before you know it, it's over "
 I never listened
 To me, life went at a proper pace of many rewards
 Until the moment that I knew, I understood,
 I would never see you again.
 My little girl
 Then my life felt as if it had been the length of one breath, one
 heartbeat.
 I never knew how much I loved my daughter until I could never tell her
 In that moment I would have traded every medal, every com-
 mendation, every promotion
 For one more second with you.
 We'll be together again, Starbuck
 But not now Soon

The episode contains additional brilliant details. Mulder's confrontation with the Smoking Man, and later his talk with Skinner, are short exposés on subjective versus objective morality—a lesson Mulder has to put to use by the end of the show. Likewise his battle (physical and intellectual) with Mr. X over whether the end justifies the means.

The show's only false note is the gimmicky use of Nurse Owens. Throughout the episode we are led to believe that Nurse Owens is nothing more than that—a nurse caring for Scully. The episode implies that she is visible to Mulder (she passes in front of the camera as Mulder enters Scully's room, indicating that she is leaving the two of them alone.) But Nurse Owens was included simply to provide a twist ending, and unfortunately the gimmick cheapens the integrity of an otherwise powerful and moving episode.

"One Breath," with its inventive story and well-developed characters, stands out among the series' many convoluted plots of supernatural

When scientists discovered
 a dormant life form in
 the hottest place on earth,
 they made a terrible mistake...

they woke it up.



phenomena and "monsters of the week." This episode proves that *The X-Files* does not need to go for the cheap thrill or silly scare in order to be entertaining and riveting television.

NOTE: The "newest Lone Gunman" member—who ends up determining that Scully's blood has abnormal protein chains that are the byproducts of "branched DNA"—is "The Thinker, a hacking genius" who plays a major role in the final episode, "Anasazi."

WRITER'S BLOCK: Where are Scully's brothers? We're accustomed to Scully's siblings changing from episode to episode (in last season's "Roland," she forgot she had a sister!), but here we see her two brothers at the beginning of the episode. Yet later, after she's returned from a mysterious disappearance in critical condition, in a coma and near death, neither brother visits! Moreover, the mother and sister discuss pulling her life-support systems without consulting those brothers.

RATING: ○○○○○

9. FIREWALKER

First televised November 18, 1994

Guest Starring Bradley Whitford (Dr. Daniel Trepkos), Leland Orser (Jason Ludwig), Shawnee Smith (Jesse O'Neil), and Tuck Milligan (Dr. Adam Pierce). Co-Starring Hiro Kanagawa (Peter Tanaka), David Kaye (Reporter), and David Lewis (Vosberg); Written by Howard Gordon, Directed by David Nutter

Intro: In Oregon, a volcano probe sees a dead man on the floor of a volcano; a shadow passes over him. **Act 1:** The probe was designed by Daniel Trepkos. Mulder and Scully go to the Cascade Mountain Range. The volcano tracking station is a mess. They meet workers Daniel Ludwig, Peter Tanaka, and Jessie O'Neil. Ludwig says Trepkos flipped out. Later, Pierce, wandering the forest, is killed by Trepkos. **Act 2:** The group returns Pierce to the station. Mulder thinks Trepkos discovered some subterranean silicon-based life organism. Tanaka is sick. A worm-like thing bursts out of his neck. **Act 3:** Maybe it's a fungus or a silicon-based organism, possibly transmitted by spores. Nobody can leave until they're sure they aren't infected. Mulder radios to have a Center for Disease Control team sent up. Mulder and Ludwig look for Trepkos. They descend into a cave; Trepkos shoots Ludwig. **Act 4:** Trepkos burns Ludwig to kill the organism living inside the body. He explains that Firewalker brought something up to the surface, but Trepkos didn't get infected. Back at the station, Jessie is infected; the parasite pops out of her neck. Mulder returns and radios the rescue team for pickup. Mulder and Scully are quarantined; Mulder allows Trepkos to escape into the mountain.

COMMENTS: "Firewalker" reveals, as much as any episode, the producers' determination to keep *The X-Files* an episodic series instead of moving into serial territory. Mulder and Scully make only passing references to her disappearance. Are viewers not supposed to notice that Mulder—obsessed with investigating bizarre cases—apparently has no interest in pursuing Scully's case? And this would be an investigation that Scully had a personal stake in solving. Sure, Scully's memory has been affected, but that's no excuse. They could begin as they do in all cases, searching the crime scene(s), interviewing witnesses, etc. If the producers were determined to avoid this, at least they could have worked in some references during "Firewalker" to let viewers know Mulder and Scully *thought* about investigating, or tried and hit dead ends. As it stands, the silence is

The X-Files Radio Commercials

Aired before "One Breath":

Announcer: "Weeks after her mysterious abduction, FBI Agent Scully has been found."

Mulder: "Will she live?"

Byers: "Mulder, there's nothing you can do."

Announcer: "The most powerful forces in America want Scully's secrets to die with her."

Mr. X: "I can't tell you why she was taken."

Announcer: "But her partner will do anything to keep her alive."

Mulder: "Who did this to her?"

SFX: gun cocks

Mulder: "Answer me!"

Announcer: "The X-Files."

Smoking Man: "You can kill me now, but you'll never know the truth."

Announcer: "A brand new episode, after *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, tonight on Fox."

Aired before "Firewalker":

Announcer: "On *The X-Files*."

Man: "A group of scientists will make its first descent into an active volcano."

Announcer: "In the hottest place on Earth, scientists have discovered a dormant life form."

Scully: "Nothing can live in a volcanic interior."

Announcer: "But they made one mistake."

Scully: "Jessie, what's wrong?"

Announcer: "They woke it up!"

Mulder: "What the hell is that?"

SFX: man screaming

Announcer: "The X-Files. A brand new episode right after *M.A.N.T.I.S.* It's all part of Fox's all-new November."



deafening.

This episode presents another scenario in which Mulder and Scully (and an assortment of bystanders) must endure the threat of an alien life-form hidden in their midst. In this respect, "Firewalker" resembles last season's "Ice" and "Darkness Falls" and this season's "Dod Kalm." "Firewalker," unfortunately, resorts to the tired cliché of aliens inhabiting human hosts, then "bursting out" to claim additional victims. The episode had the potential to be much more, but the show's creative team seem content with concocting shadowy scares and murky threats. Worse, the episode contains too many characters and inter-relationships. While these plot points become clearer as the show progresses, "Firewalker" is bogged down by too much backstory which erodes the show's momentum. After the wonderful "One Breath," "Firewalker" is a big disappointment.

This is Scully's first case after being abducted. Apparently her past ordeal has affected her memory. Why is she so adamantly opposed to Mulder's theory that the threat may be from a new, silicon-based lifeform? In recent months she has seen an alien embryo, a giant "Flukeman," and an extraterrestrial tracking device. But in "Firewalker" she calls Mulder's life-form theory "science fiction and delusional" (the writers' favorite word this season). After all Scully's been through—after all she's *seen*—just how *would* she define science fiction? Fortunately, Scully comes around to Mulder's way of thinking (doesn't she always?) as the show progresses.

WRITER'S BLOCK: The episode opens with the televised images from the volcano floor. The scientists see the large shadow of "something alive." But the episode never explains what the shadow was. Since the real threat in "Firewalker" turns out to be microscopic spores, it's unlikely they could have cast such a large shadow. Clearly, this episode's dramatic opening is yet another manipulative gimmick by the show's creative team. Once again they set viewers up for a punchline and then fail to deliver. This type of storytelling is unforgivable.

RATING: ☹☹

10. RED MUSEUM

First televised December 9, 1994

Guest Starring Paul Sand (Thomas), Steve Eastin (Sheriff Mazeroski), Mark Rolston (Richard Odin), and Lindsey Ginter (Crew Cut Man), Co-Starring Gillian Barber (Beth Kane), Bob Frazer (Gary Kane), Robert Clothier (Old Man), and Elisabeth Rosen (Katie). Featuring Crystal Verge, Cameron Labine (Rick), Tony Sampson, Gerry Nairn, and Brian McGugan; Written by Chris Carter; Directed by Win Phelps

Intro: Beth, a beef processing plant worker, arrives home and is spied upon by Thomas while taking her shower. Her son Gary receives a phone call and leaves. He's found by police the next day wandering around the forest, dressed only in his underwear. On his back is written "He is one." **Act 1:** Mulder and Scully head to Delta Glen, Wisconsin to investigate; there are two similar cases. The sheriff shows Mulder and Scully the vegetarian Church of the Red Museum. Mulder and Scully talk with Gary. He felt a spirit enter him—maybe an animal spirit. Mulder explains "walk-ins"—inhabitation to enlightened spirits—to Scully. Rick, the sheriff's son, drops his girlfriend off at her home; she is grabbed from behind and later found wandering around in the forest in her underwear hallucinating about birds and insects. "She is one" is written on her back. **Act 2:** Scully examines the girl; she was drugged. Richard Odin, leader of the Red Museum, is a

former doctor, so he's arrested. An old man drives Mulder and Scully to his farm, where two men (one is Thomas) are injecting the cows with a growth hormone. The people in the area have gotten meaner since the use of hormones started. A plane crashes in a field. **Act 3:** Dr. Gerald Larson dies in the crash. His briefcase is filled with money—and a vial. Larson delivered all of the missing kids. The Crew Cut Man (from "Erlenmeyer Flask" in the first season) kills one of the old man's farm workers. Beth tells Mulder that Gary never got sick; he went to Dr. Larson for "vitamin" shots. Mulder discovers the spy set-up behind one of Beth's walls. Rick is kidnapped and later found, dead, with "He is one" on his back. **Act 4:** Mulder and Scully pass the Crew Cut Man's car on the road. Thomas confesses to kidnapping the kids, but he didn't murder Rick. Thomas was upset at Larson's tests on the kids. Larson paid him to inject the cattle. Scully remembers the Crew Cut Man killed Deep Throat. Larson's vial contains "purity control." Mulder concludes the kids were injected with antibodies possibly derived from an extraterrestrial source—possibly alien DNA. Mulder and Scully round up all the kids who were tested and hide them at the Red Museum compound. Mulder tracks down the Crew Cut Man at the meat plant, but Mulder ends up locked in a room. The Crew Cut Man gets ready to burn the plant when Scully and the sheriff arrive; the sheriff shoots and kills the man. Tested kids ended up with flu-like ailment; none of Red Museum members caught it; they must have been a control group.

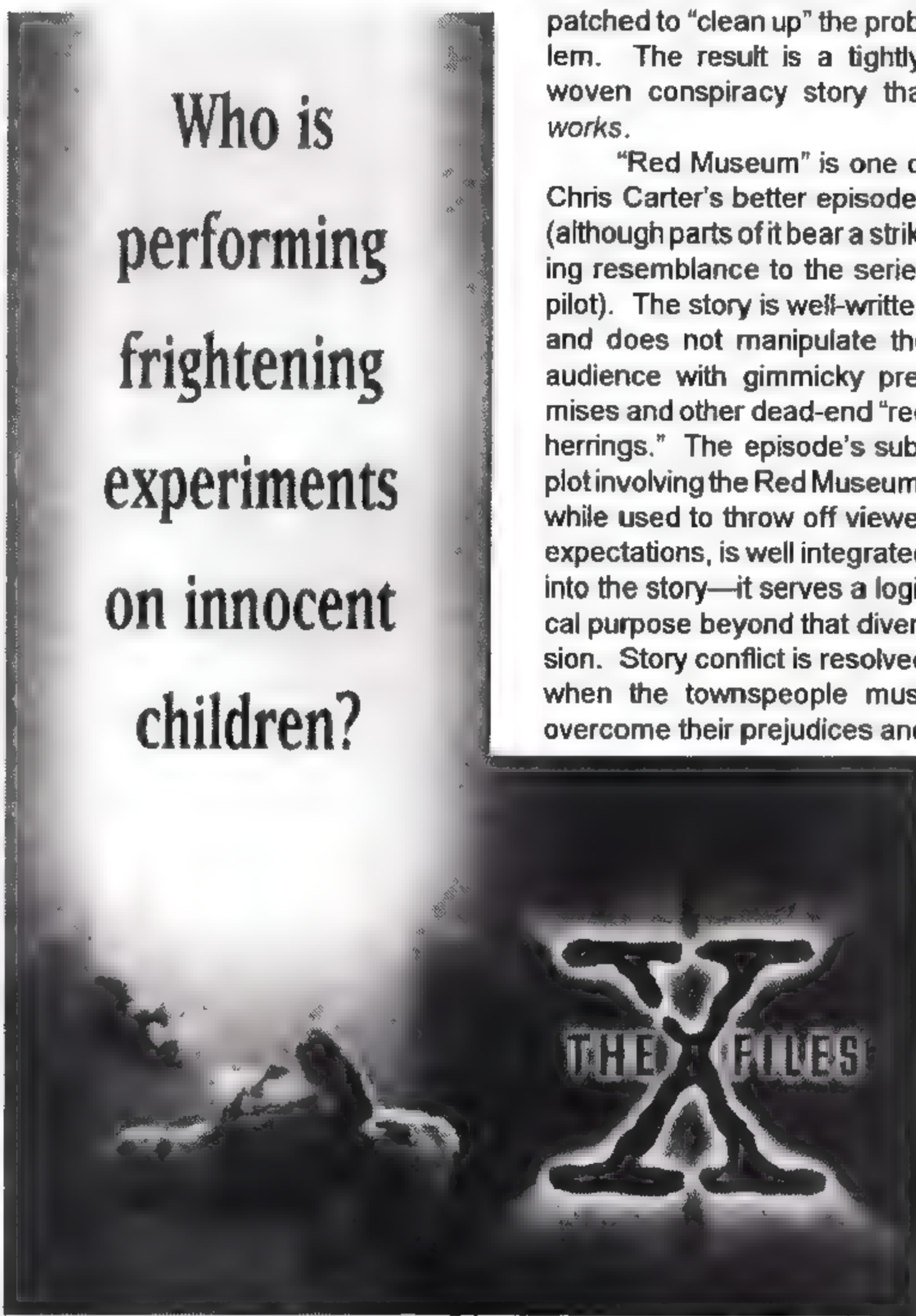
COMMENTS: "Red Museum" proves to be an engaging and satisfying episode. The show addresses the topical concern of growth hormone use in cattle, but in "Red Museum" something far more sinister is being injected into livestock. Mulder and Scully discover that the substance is "purity control"—the same stuff they encountered in "The Erlenmeyer Flask." This discovery, together with the return of the Crew Cut Man, makes "Red Museum" a direct sequel to "The Erlenmeyer Flask." All the pieces from the previous episode fit together nicely here.

While "Red Museum" starts out with the seemingly mundane plot of a local religious sect possibly terrorizing the community's youth, the episode takes a surprise turn early on. Mulder and Scully soon realize they are dealing with a much larger threat—a covert government experiment gone awry. Just as Mulder and Scully have been assigned to investigate, the

Crew Cut Man has been dispatched to "clean up" the problem. The result is a tightly-woven conspiracy story that works.

"Red Museum" is one of Chris Carter's better episodes (although parts of it bear a striking resemblance to the series pilot). The story is well-written and does not manipulate the audience with gimmicky premises and other dead-end "red herrings." The episode's subplot involving the Red Museum, while used to throw off viewer expectations, is well integrated into the story—it serves a logical purpose beyond that diversion. Story conflict is resolved when the townspeople must overcome their prejudices and

Who is
performing
frightening
experiments
on innocent
children?



The Picket Fences/X-Files Crossover

Chris Carter and *Picket Fences* creator David E. Kelley cooked up a plan to have an *X-Files* storyline cross over into an episode of *Fences*—including a cameo appearance by David Duchovny. CBS, *Picket Fences*' network, nixed the plan because they didn't want give any publicity to a rival network's program.

Nevertheless, the December 16 episode of *Picket Fences* still managed to work in a number of references to "Red Museum," which takes place in Wisconsin, location of *Fences*' city of Rome.

Most of the references to *XF* occur in the first act. When farmer David Pasteur is discovered transporting one of his dead cows for burial in the middle of the night—with its stomach cut open, to boot—Sheriff James Brock (Tom Skerritt) decides to investigate. Rome coroner Carter Pike (Kelly Connell) has been talking to the Delta Glen coroner, and rumors have leaked out about the cows there being injected with synthetic drugs—possibly extraterrestrial DNA. "The FBI's been all over Delta Glen for the last week," Carter tells Brock. "They first thought the cows were being injected with some bovine growth hormone. Turns out it was something else." There were two murders there last week, "plus a mysterious plane crash with a doctor who was injecting kids with some mysterious vitamin drug which turned some of them into teenage rapists." Carter thinks that Pasteur is "doing the same thing that this Dr. Larson was doing over in Delta Glen. Those cows are being injected with something."

Brock decides to call in the FBI, and soon an Agent Morell (Sam Anderson) shows up (presumably the role Duchovny would have played). Morell denies any kind of alien DNA goings-on in Delta Glen, but Carter persists: "Well then what was the FBI doing in Delta Glen? What about the teenage rapists and the plane crash and the people in red frocks who won't eat meat? I want answers!"

Morell: "There was no finding of alien DNA in the Delta Glen cows....That's an unsolved case, and it doesn't involve you." Carter accuses of Morell of a cover-up.

From there, most of the *XF* references end as the episode becomes a bizarre story of a cow giving birth to a human child from an implanted fertilized egg.

Apparently Duchovny would have played Fox Mulder in the proposed cross-over, but we can't imagine Mulder with Morell's dialogue denying alien involvement and being accused of participating in the "cover-up." We assume Kelley rewrote the dialogue for the new agent.

The episode, "Away in the Manger," was written by Kelley and directed by Bill D'Elia. Despite CBS's rejection of the official cross-over, word of the plan leaked out in the December 9 *Entertainment Weekly*, and the episode ended up getting respectable ratings. Ironically, though, the pseudo-cross-over stands as a metaphor of the fates of the two series. Since that episode, *XF* has enjoyed some of its best ratings ever, while *Picket Fences* began its ratings slide (helped along by the gradual strengthening of *Homicide: Life on the Street*).

One final note of interest. CBS moved *Fences* back one hour for this fall, so it will be competing head-to-head with *The X-Files* very soon!

Photo by Tony Esparza, © 1994 CBS



work with the sect members to protect the kids. But the Red Museum serves another plot function—they were also a control group of non-meat eaters set up by the government. (One wonders if the Red Museum's religious beliefs were manufactured by the government to provide a fool-proof cover. If so, the episode does not address this fascinating notion, although future episode could return to it.)

NOTES: "Red Museum" was originally intended as the first part of a two-part cross-over between *The X-Files* and *Picket Fences* (see sidebar). Although an episode of *Fences* makes reference to events in this episode of *XF*, "Red Museum" is a self-contained story. And we assume the "Dr. Larson" reference in this episode is not coincidental. Gary Larson wrote and drew "The Far Side" cartoon panel, which often featured anthropomorphic cows for its humor.

WRITER'S BLOCK: Mulder and Scully arrest Odin on rather flimsy pretenses. Just because he was once a medical doctor (albeit one with a shady background) does not give them grounds to arrest the man. Odin's innocence becomes clear as the episode progresses, but we never see him released, nor do Mulder and Scully apologize for their sloppy police work. Thomas's motivations are a bit unclear, unless one goes with the always reliable "he was just a nut" defense. But why did the kids feel possessed? Why the animal hallucinations? What happened to them upon being kidnapped and taken to the woods?

RATING: ○○○○

11. EXCELSIS DEI

First televised December 16, 1994

Guest Starring Teryl Rothery (Michelle Charters), Sab Shimono (Gung), Frances Bay (Dorothy), Eric Christmas (Stan Phillips), and David Fresco (Hal Arden); Co-Starring Sheila Moore (Mrs. Dawson), Jerry Wasserman (Dr. Grago), Tasha Simms (Laura), Jon Cuihbert (Tiernan), Paul Jarrett (Upshaw), and Ernie Prentice (Leo); Written by Paul Brown; Directed by Stephen Surjik

Intro: At the Excelsis Dei Convalescent Home in Worcester, Massachusetts, Nurse Charters is thrown onto a bed by an invisible force and strapped in. **Act 1:** Mulder and Scully talk with Charters, who claims she was raped by an invisible spirit. She accuses Hal Arden with the attack, but she has no physical evidence. Arden scoffs at the accusation, but soon, he chokes to death. **Act 2:** Arden was part of Dr. Grago's experimental program treating Alzheimer patients—and they seem to be improving. Mulder thinks Michelle concocted the story to get out of a job she hates. Arden's roommate Stan is being picked up by his daughter to be taken home, but he doesn't want to go. He flees out the window. An orderly tries to call him back in, but an invisible force pushes the orderly over the ledge, and he falls to his death. **Act 3:** Dorothy sees ghosts in her room. Grago studies Arden's toxicology report and notices a poison in small amounts that causes hallucinations. Mulder goes to the basement to look for the Asian orderly, Gung. He opens a locked room, finds mushrooms being harvested and a buried body, Upshaw. **Act 4:** Gung admits to the mushrooms but not to the killing. He was giving the mushrooms to patients because it made them feel better. Gung says the spirit of the place killed Upshaw, taking revenge for the mistreatment. Ghosts trap Mulder and Michelle in the bathroom and turn on the water. The door won't open; they're in danger of drowning. Stan is going into convulsions. He is given a shot; the ghosts fade away, the bathroom door opens. Dorothy says the ghosts are all gone. The state takes over the Home; Gung and Grago are replaced; his experimental program is ended. The patients regress, and Michelle's suit is settled out of court.

COMMENTS: "Excelsis Dei" presents a character reversal (of sorts) between Mulder and Scully. Scully is the one who initiates the case, believing that the nurse's claim of supernatural attack must have some validity. In fact, she checks the X-Files for similar cases. Ironically, Mulder is skeptical and must be convinced to investigate. Later, Scully makes the intuitive leap that some factor at the nursing home is affecting the residents and possibly caused the attack. Mulder, however, seems bored and uninspired by the case.


None of these interactions fit the characters. Even if Scully is willing to believe in the supernatural (or unexplainable) forces—a premise she must eventually accept given how much exposure she's had to it—certainly Mulder would be willing to accept extreme possibilities. Only later in the episode, when Mulder proposes a theory regarding the mushrooms and the spiritual world, does he become interested in the case. (By this time, Scully returns to her typical skeptical attitude.)

In the meantime, Scully must convince Mulder of the case, but Mulder responds with the uncharacteristic line, "I think you're looking too hard for

something that's not there." Why would Mulder ever say anything like this? Even if he didn't believe in the case, surely he of all people would pursue the investigation with an open mind!

The writer hints early on toward some kind of gender role commentary, but by the end the respective views get swirled around, negating (or at the very least undercutting) any commentary that may have been attempted.

But Mulder and Scully's role reversals are minor compared to the episode's confusing premise. Why are there ghosts in the nursing home? The mushrooms alter the *minds* of elderly patients so that they can see the ghosts, but how then do the ghosts become physical threats? The episode implies that the ghosts are already there, but can only be seen after taking the drug. Yet then it appears they are somehow being channeled through Stan who is overdosing on the drug. If so, why did the ghost rape Nurse Charters? And why did they kill Hal? The motivations for these supernatural acts and their tenuous connections to Stan are left unexplained. The result is a confusing, muddled episode that leaves more questions than answers. **WRITER'S BLOCK:** Why does Nurse Charters claim to be raped by a ghost (which sets Scully off on a search through similar X-Files cases) and then claim that her attacker was one of the *living* patients? The doctor at the nursing home says the building hasn't had working elevators in years! Just what kind of geriatric facility is Excelsis Dei?! The episode makes it seem like an ancient, dilapidated building on the verge of being condemned. While such a setting clearly adds mood to such a "ghost story," it seems highly implausible that the Massachusetts Department of Public Health didn't close Excelsis Dei years earlier.

RATING: 

12. AUBREY

First televised January 6, 1995

Guest Starring Terry O'Quinn (Lt. Brian Tillman), Deborah Strang (Det. B.J. Morrow), Morgan Woodward (Harry Cokely), and Joy Coghill (Linda); Co-Starring Robyn Driscoll (Detective Joe Darnell), Peter Fleming (Officer #1), Sarah Jane Redmond (Young Man), and Emanuel Hajek (Young Cokely); Written by Sara B. Chamo, Directed by Rob Bowman.

Intro: One night in Aubrey, Missouri, Det. B.J. Morrow digs up FBI agent Sam Chaney in a deserted field. **Act 1:** Mulder and Scully study Chaney's case. He and partner Ed Ledbetter disappeared in 1942 in Aubrey working on a case. Mulder reads Chaney's notebook and reviews the 1942 murder cases—victims were all young women; the word "sister" was carved into their chests; and each victim received a blow to the head and bled to death. Morrow has vision of the 1942 killing. Morrow says Chaney's rib cage cuts spell "brother." Tillman is investigating a case from three days ago—a dead woman had "sister" carved across her chest. Another victim is found, Johnson. **Act 2:** Morrow tells Mulder and Scully about her dreams and visions. She finds the man in her dream in a forties police mug shot book—Harry Cokely. He was convicted in 1945 for killing the women; he was released from the penitentiary in 1993. One of his victims, Linda Thibedoux, managed to escape. Mulder and Scully visit Cokely—he's old and sickly. Morrow wakes from a dream covered in blood; sister has been scrawled on her chest. She thinks she sees a young Cokely in her room. After a vision, she tears up floorboards in her home and discovers Ledbetter's bones. **Act 3:** Morrow says a young Cokely attacked her. Scully thinks Cokely killed Johnson. Mulder and Scully visit Linda; she got pregnant by Cokely and gave the baby to an adoption agency. Mulder thinks Cokely's grandson might be the attacker. It turns out Cokely's son was Raymond Morrow—B.J.'s father! B.J. is Cokely's granddaughter—she's the killer. Cokely's memories and compulsions have been passed down to her. Mulder thinks Morrow will go after Linda, finishing what Cokely started. Morrow visits Linda; they realize they're related, so Morrow spares Linda. **Act 4:** Morrow attacks Cokely; Mulder arrives on the scene and is attacked himself. Scully and Tillman arrive. Cokely dies. Morrow doesn't kill Mulder.

COMMENTS: This episode is reminiscent of the first season's "Tooms" for several reasons. It shares, for example, that episode's Stephen King-ish atmosphere. More importantly, however, this episode emphasizes a genetic explanation for the horrors committed. Last year we wrote that many episodes of *XF* hint at "an indifferent, amoral universe imposing itself on humanity in general, and Mulder and Scully specifically.... The 'monsters'—be they Tooms, or the various Eves, or whoever—are primarily genetically driven and deterministically acting out their survival needs." In "Aubrey," Morrow is not acting out any survival need, but the writer suggests that she is a mere pawn in the events, "possessed" (so to speak) by Cokely's genetic makeup. This is distinguished from the general understanding of "possession" (control) that takes some acquiescence on the part of the

X-Files Numbers Games

We've noticed two number sequences from the episodes that have special significance. In "The Host" (written by Chris Carter), Scully is doing an autopsy on "John Doe #101356." Interestingly, *XF* is a "Ten Thirteen Production" (as viewers are told at the end of each episode). If we divide the numerals into a date, we get 10-13-56 (October 13, 1956), which is Carter's date of birth.

Another date has been even more prominent. In the above-mentioned autopsy, Scully identifies the subject as "Case #DP112148." The middle sequence—1121—appears several times in the series, including at the end of the pilot episode on Scully's bedside digital clock: it turns from 11:21 to 11:22 when Mulder calls to tell her that the Billy Miles paperwork filed at the DA's office is gone. In an interesting parallel scene at the end of the first season ("The Erlenmeyer Flask"), Scully again wakes to receive a phone call from Mulder (this time to tell her that Skinner has shut down the X-Files), and the clock again turns from 11:21 to 11:22. (Both the pilot and "The Erlenmeyer Flask" are written by Carter.)

The second season continues this game. In "Irresistible," Scully wakes from a weird dream and looks at the clock—11:21. At the end of "Colony," when the fake Mulder knocks on Scully's motel room, the time, again, is 11:21. "F. Emasculation" goes even further, however. It repeats the entire "Host" sequence as a package ID number for the mysterious envelope delivered to the prisoner; Scully repeats the number when calling to track the shipper. ("Irresistible," "Colony," and "F. Emasculation" are all written or co-written by Carter.)


The number 112148 also represents a date—November 21, 1948. We're unsure about the year, but November 21 is the birth date of Carter's wife, Dori Pierson. Note that her initials, "DP," begin the sequence DP112148.

person. Morrow seems somewhat absolved of her crimes. This is consistent with the universe established in the series, but it also allows the writers of the series to sidestep more profound moral issues and deeper insight into the characters. (We barely notice that no explanation for her sudden killings is given; there's just the simplistic "the genetics made me do it.")

Within the context of *The X-Files*, however, "Aubrey" is a strong episode. Rob Bowman turns in yet another beautiful directing job. The black and white photography utilized in the flashback/vision sequences is effectively employed. A number of scenes are quite powerful, such as Morrow's waking up covered in blood, then seeing the reflection of a young Cokely in the mirror. And although Morrow's guilt at the end doesn't come as a complete surprise, the way it's done—by making her Cokely's granddaughter—is both interesting and logical for the story.

"Aubrey" features some great dialogue (Mulder and Scully's banter about acting on hunches is quite funny) and some fine guest stars—Deborah Strang delivers a great performance as B.J., the confused victim/perpetrator.

XF is often described as a horror series, yet because of often ludicrous story foundations, we rarely find episodes frightening. The shocking nature of "Aubrey"—in true Stephen King fashion—may come about as close to horror as any of the episodes so far.

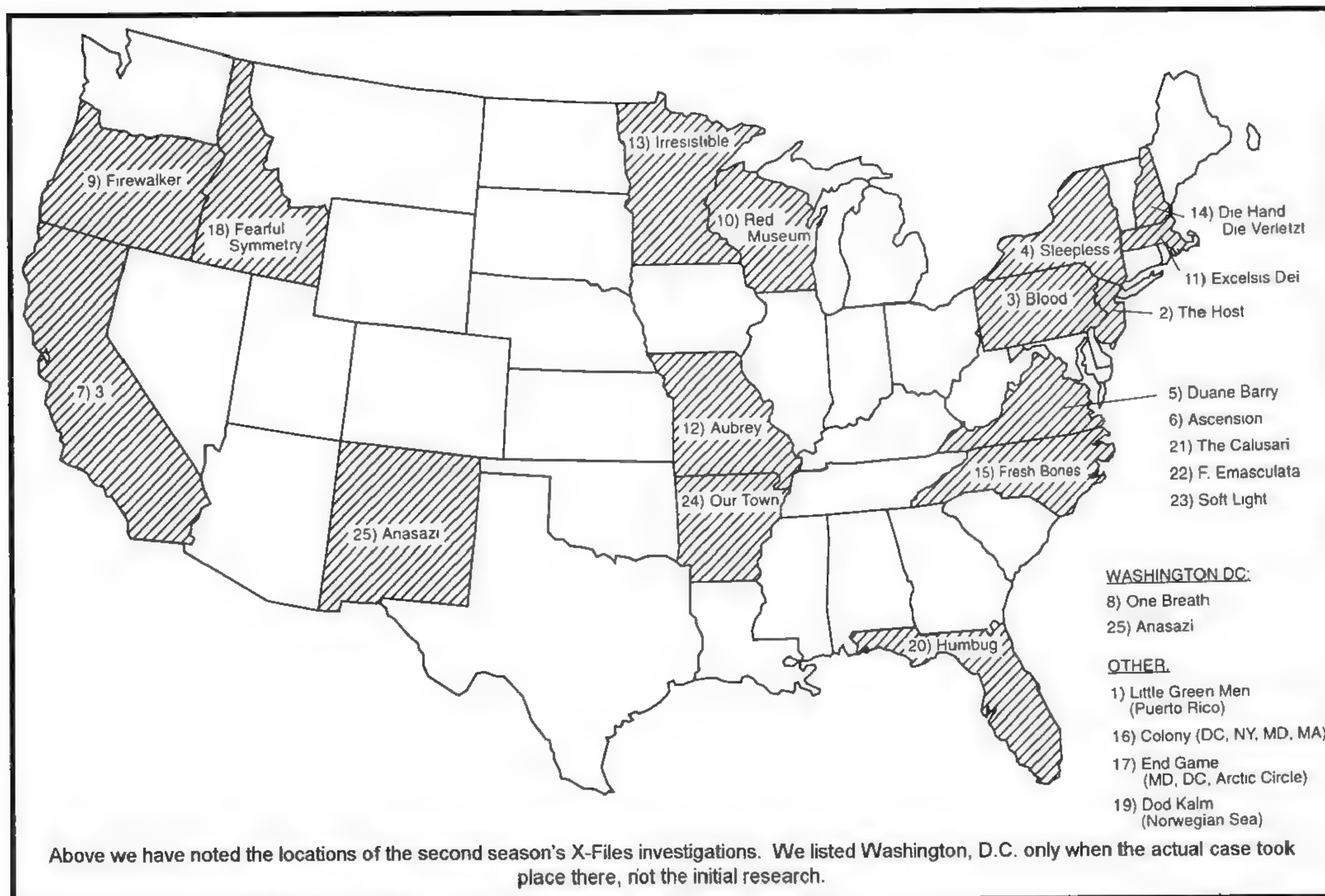
RATING: 

13. IRRESISTIBLE

First televised January 13, 1995

Guest Starring Bruce Weitz (Agent Moe Bocks) and Nick Chinlund (Donnie Pfaster); Co-Starring Deanna Milligan (Satin), Robert Thurston (Toews), Glynis Davies (Ellen Brumfield), Christine Willes (Karen Kosseff), and Tim Progosh (Mr. Fielding); Featuring Dwight McFee, Denalda Williams, Maggie O'Hara, Kathleen DuBorg, Mark Saunders, and Ciara Hunter; Written by Chris Carter; Directed by David Nutter

Intro: One night, funeral home worker Donnie Pfaster is caught cutting a corpse's hair. (At one point, Pfaster briefly changes into a monster.) **Act 1:** In Minneapolis, Mulder and Scully investigate the unearthed, desecrated grave of a young woman. Scully is squeamish. Later, police discover two more desecrations. Mulder is worried that the fetishist may turn to homicide to procure his bodies. Pfaster picks up a hooker and kills her. Later, Mulder inspects the body; Scully doesn't want to look. **Act 2:** Mulder realizes the



killer's psychosis is not sexual, but arising from a deeper need to defile the women stemming from a deep hatred of them. Following a comparative religion class at a local community college, Pfaster attacks a classmate, but she escapes. Scully has a weird dream—she's on an examination table; the sheet is pulled away, and Pfaster-as-alien stands above her. **Act 3:** Pfaster discovers Scully's identity. Scully wants to return to Washington to conduct some additional lab work. While there, she talks with employee counselor Kosseff. Scully doesn't want Mulder to know how much this case is bothering her, that he might feel the need to protect her. And she's beginning to doubt her abilities. Scully flies back to Minneapolis. Pfaster follows her from the airport and rams her car. **Act 4:** Police find Scully's empty car. Pfaster and Scully are holed up in a house. Scully sees Pfaster-as-alien for an instant. She manages to elude him and hides in the house. He catches her and they struggle. He becomes an alien again briefly. Mulder and police break in and rescue her. Scully tries to ignore that she's distraught; finally she cries and embraces Mulder, and he holds her. Mulder's final report: "Our fear of the everyday...[is] as frightening as any X-File."

COMMENTS: "Irresistible" is even more terrifying than "Aubrey" because it represents what Mulder says at the end—the fear of the "everyday," the commonplace. This is what makes Stephen King's work so effective, but he adds a heavy dose of the supernatural (as does "Aubrey"), whereas "Irresistible" in some ways goes one better by removing the need for the supernatural all together. The episode is a great example of how well Mulder and Scully would work a "normal" case. The early UFO hook is a nice way to get them on to the case—then, wisely, it's quickly eliminated.

This episode does for Scully what "One Breath" does for the Mulder character—give her some depth, some humanity, by revealing imperfections that she must overcome in order to become the best agent possible. The gender dynamics are too complicated to get into here, but the basis for the story brilliantly works to dig deep into Scully to force some analysis (and self-analysis) of the character.

"Irresistible" is about Scully, her fears, and her self doubts. Scully's visit to the FBI psychologist adds greater depth to her character. Her final line about faith ("I want that faith back—I need it back") reminds us of who Scully

is and what she's been through. Scully, the scientific believer-in-facts still needs faith—the belief in something beyond science—in order to cope with her world. Scully's relationship with Mulder is also strengthened in this episode. She reveals to the viewer (and to herself) her unshakable trust in him. The scene following Scully's rescue is nicely written and brilliantly performed by Duchovny and Anderson. Scully's hesitancy to open up and be honest in front of Mulder is perfectly conveyed by Anderson; and the fact that Scully does so with a final, emotional embrace with Mulder allows for a thematic resolution to the story in addition to potential for further character development.

Some elements are left unclear, and it's difficult to determine whether that's by sloppiness or design. As a medical doctor who has performed numerous autopsies, Scully should not be squeamish about dead bodies, of all things. Is such irony supposed to tell us something more about the character? Is she uncomfortable because the mutilations were done to females? Would she have been just as upset if the crimes had been done against men? These issues should have been hinted at (at least), but in a series that mostly ignores character development, we'll take what we can get.

The primary flaw of the episode is the needless "morphing" scenes of Pfaster to bring some supernatural element into the story. (The changes appear to both Scully and the funeral home worker, negating some psychological explanation). They are glaringly out of place and reflect a lack of confidence on Carter's part toward both his ability to create a gripping story without such crutches and toward his audience to accept such a story. We hope he has realized by now that *XF* can, indeed, experiment with different types of stories. (Or is it supposed to tie in somehow with the morphing alien of "Colony"? Is Carter suggesting that some of the weirdos among us are really extraterrestrials? If so, he should have let well enough alone.) Chris Carter proves he can write a suspenseful "thriller" without having to rely on supernatural monsters to provide scares. In fact, once freed from the confines of the series' paranormal elements, Carter shines as a screenwriter. With "Irresistible" he has crafted a tightly-woven, well-paced story that delivers shocks as well as strong character development.

WRITER'S BLOCK: The housewife tells Pfaster—an unknown delivery

man whom she just met—that the back door to her home is always open! (How may viewers groaned when they heard this?!) Clearly she's inviting trouble, and although the scene is designed to create tension, it's hard for viewers to feel sympathy for anyone that stupid. This ridiculous plot point is wisely abandoned as the story progresses.

RATING: ●●●●●

14. DIE HAND DIE VERLETZT ("The Hand that Wounds")

First televised January 27, 1995

Guest Starring Dan Butler (Jim Ausbury), Susan Blommaert (Phyllis Paddock), and Heather McComb (Shannon Ausbury); Co-Starring Shaun Johnson (Pete Calcagni), P. Lynn Johnson (Deborah Brown), and Travis MacDonald (Dave Duran); Featuring Michelle Goodger, Larry Musser, Franky Ceinege, Laura Harris, and Doug Abrahams; Written by Glen Morgan & James Wong; Directed by Kim Manners.

Intro: The Parent Teacher Committee of Milford Haven, New Hampshire ends a meeting with a Satanic prayer. **Act 1:** One night, four youths meet in the woods and pray a Satanic prayer. One of the boys, Gerry, is choked to death by someone. Mulder and Scully investigate. The victim's eyes and heart have been cut out. Toads fall from sky. Mulder and Scully talk with victim's friends. A substitute teacher, Phyllis Paddock, has the heart and eyes in her desk drawer. **Act 2:** Shannon, a student who attended the ceremony out in the woods, talks with Mulder and Scully. Her stepfather is Jim Ausbury of the PTC. She says he molested her when she was four years old; she also remembers strange ceremonies in her house attended by her and her sister. Shannon was a "breeder"; she's had three babies so far, all buried in the cellar. Jim murdered her sister at eight years old. Mulder and Scully talk with Jim and Mrs. Ausbury—Shannon's sister died at eight weeks old, not 8 years, of crib death. Later, at school, Shannon attempts a dissection in class lab, but the substitute teacher puts a spell on her, and she slashes her wrists. **Act 3:** The PTC decides another sacrifice is needed to "rekindle their faith." Mulder searches the Ausbury cellar. Jim tells Mulder about his Satanic religion. Jim admits to including his step-daughters in the ceremonies but denies sexually molesting them. Mulder handcuffs Jim in the cellar and leaves him. Paddock casts a spell—a snake crawls down the stairs and eats Jim. **Act 4:** Mulder and Scully look for Jim in the cellar and find only a pile of bones and a large snake skin. Mulder and Scully go to the school and are attacked by the PTC members. The PTC members prepare to sacrifice them, but Paddock casts a spell, and one of the members shoots the other two, then himself.

COMMENTS: It was only a matter of time before *The X-Files* would base an episode on Satanism and Satanic rituals. Unfortunately that episode is "Die Hand Die Verletzt," a muddled, nonsensical story that wastes a topic rife with fascinating and controversial elements.

The biggest flaw in "Die Hand Die Verletzt" is Morgan and Wong's attempt to portray a group of occultists (Satanists, probably, although they're never explicitly called that) as middle-American citizens who believe in upholding community standards and family values! This bizarre group of dark worshipers have actually formed a sort of PTA and seem genuinely concerned about the welfare of their students. One member actually worries that a school rendition of "Grease" might contain the "F word." Why would a group that ends its meetings with a prayer to dark (re: evil) forces ever care about a simple vulgarity? This scene is a perfect example of how "Die Hand Die Verletzt" tries repeatedly to excuse Satanism as a bona fide religion. Such a concept is misguided and poorly conceived.

Certain early bits of PTC dialogue seem to be written in such a way as to suggest some sort of parallel between the Satanists and the "Religious Right." Are the writers trying to be cute with such analogies? If so, the remainder of the episode undercuts their point by showing that specific concerns about Satanism may be legitimate. Even then, this danger is never re-examined by Mulder, who early on dismisses witchcraft and Satanism as harmless.

The character of Mrs. Paddock offers further evidence of the story's weak conception. Paddock is clearly a demon, apparently on Earth to exact revenge upon the group of four worshipers. Her reasons for doing so, however, are unclear. Is she punishing them for not being true to their Satanic faith? If so, why kill Shannon and Gerry? On the other hand, if Paddock was completely evil why not kill Mulder and Scully? Paddock's nonsensical message at the episode's end indicated she had a singular mission. Unfortunately "Die Hand Die Verletzt" was incapable of portraying it convincingly.

While "Die Hand Die Verletzt" is seriously flawed it contains some nice touches. Shannon's high school is appropriately named "Crowley High

School," a nod toward famed Satanist Alister Crowley. As Mulder flips through the library card catalog he passes a card for "Four Past Midnight" by Stephen King. Finally, Mrs. Paddock's parting message, "It's been nice working with you," could be a parting message from Glen Morgan and James Wong—this is their final episode as writers and co-executive producers.

NOTE: The opening credits list the writers as James "Charger" Wong and Glen "Bolts, Baby" Morgan.

WRITER'S BLOCK: In "Die Hand Die Verletzt" the writers refuse to acknowledge episode-to-episode continuity. In "Irresistible" Scully balks at the corpses she and Mulder encounter. In this episode, however, she doesn't even flinch at what Mulder calls "victim desecration" in which bodies have "eyes and hearts cut out." (Or is it okay this week since it's a guy?) After Shannon provides an emotional and gruesome account of her childhood molestation, she returns to school to continue her lab assignment! (Although Shannon's story was probably false, she believed it. Why would she go back to school after such an ordeal? For that matter, why would Mulder, Scully or the school officials let her?) Who killed Gerry? Why does Mulder leave Jim handcuffed in his cellar? Why does Paddock keep the victim's heart and eyes in her desk drawer where they could easily be discovered? In fact, it's not even her desk—she's just the *substitute* teacher—making it even riskier! Mulder and Scully never get corroborating evidence about Shannon's sister; Scully seems to accept the mother's explanation for the death (as if the mother would admit to Jim's murdering the child if it were true!).

RATING: ●●

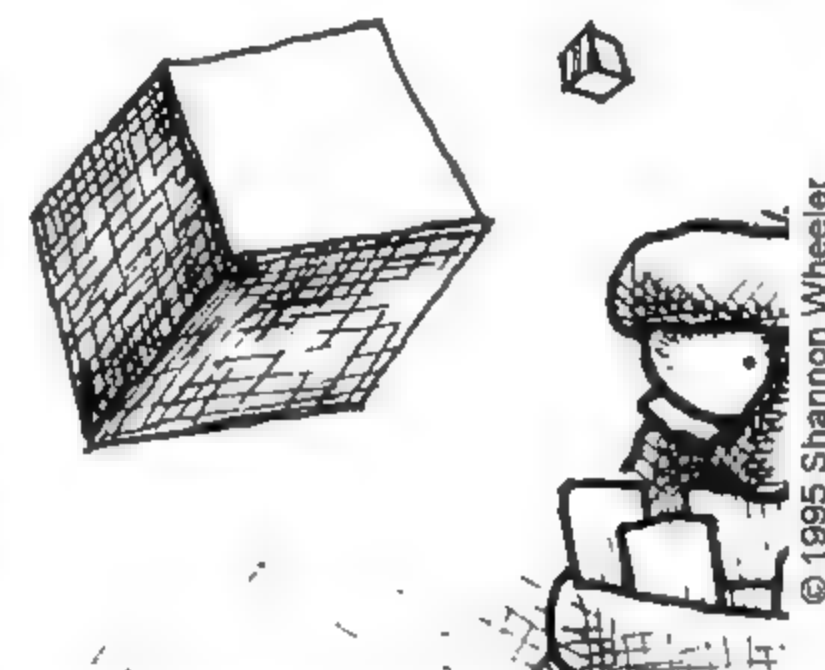
15. FRESH BONES

First televised February 3, 1995

Guest Starring Bruce Young (Pierre Bauvais), Daniel Benzali (Col. Wharton), Jamil Walker Smith, Matt Hill (Pvt. Harry Dunham), Callum Keith Rennie, and Steven Williams (Mr. X); Co-Starring Kevin Conway (Pvt. Jack McAlpin), Katya Gardner (Robin McAlpin), Roger Cross (Private Kittel), and Peter Kelamis (Lieutenant Foyle); Written by Howard Gordon; Directed by Rob Bowman.

Intro: In Folkstone, North Carolina, young soldier Jack McAlpin hallucinates and crashes his car into a tree, which is marked with a strange symbol.

Act 1: The military won't investigate McAlpin's death, so his wife contacts Mulder. Mulder and Scully visit the Folkstone I.N.S. Processing Center. Mulder buys a "lucky charm" from a boy, Chester Bonaparte, for protection. Col. Wharton talks about tensions in the camp and last month's riot of Haitians led by Pierre Bauvais. In the brig, Bauvais explains the tree symbol to Mulder and says Jack's disappearance is a warning from the spirits. Upon leaving the camp, Mulder and Scully almost run over Jack, wandering in the middle of the road. **Act 2:** Scully finds poisons in Jack; Mulder talks about zombies. Mulder wants to exhume Manuel Gutierrez, another "suicidal" soldier, but body snatchers already got to it. Mulder and Scully see Chester and take him to lunch. Private Dunham tells Mulder and Scully that Bauvais warned Wharton he'd kill the men and take their souls, one by one, if the Colonel didn't allow a return to Haiti. Chester runs away; Mulder chases him to the docks, but the boy disappears. **Act 3:** Wharton denies any policy of harassment toward the Haitians. In the car, Scully pricks herself on a thorny branch. Mulder meets Mr. X, who implies the military is sanctioning Wharton's treatment as retaliation for recent activities against the U.S. when it was in Haiti. Scully visits Mulder's hotel room; Dunham is dead in the bathtub. Mulder enters with Jack, who was wandering around outside with bloody knife in hand. **Act 4:** Jack doesn't recall anything. Mulder wants to talk with Bauvais, but he died last night. Mrs. McAlpin gives Mulder a picture of Bauvais with Wharton—in Haiti! Mulder and Scully search Wharton's office and discover that he killed Gutierrez because he and Dunham filed complaints about Wharton's abuse at the camp. Mulder believes Wharton killed Bauvais. Mulder finds Wharton at Bauvais's grave. Scully has hallucinations while in the car. Bauvais appears and kills Wharton. Scully meets up with Mulder; Bauvais is still in his casket. Later, at the camp, Mulder and Scully learn that Chester died six weeks ago in the riot. At the graveyard, Wharton is being buried—but he's returned to life and



ends up being buried alive.

COMMENTS: "Fresh Bones" is another stylish episode from director Rob Bowman, who is proving to be the series' best director. Television is typically suited for medium and close-up shots; long shots are brief and used sparingly. While Bowman basically adheres to this television tenet, he still manages to create beautiful and striking long shots and finds ways to use them effectively. For example, Mulder and Scully's first visit to the graveyard incorporates the surrounding woods, the neatly arranged cemetery plots, and the characters' purposeful demeanor. Bowman transcends the medium, making an ordinary television scene cinematic. He accomplishes the same effect when Mulder confronts Private Dunham in the restaurant parking lot. Bowman carefully composes the shot to include the large expansion bridge in the background. Images such as these are rare on television—Bowman's careful attention to detail and cinematic eye make *The X-Files* a joy to look at.

Unfortunately the plot of "Fresh Bones" does not quite match its visual style. While the story is competent and engaging, it is still predictable. *The X-Files* too often relies on formula and cliché. The writer apparently believes that introducing voodoo allows him arbitrarily to kill off and bring back characters. The viewer knows that some minor character will likely be killed at the end of Act 2 or Act 3 (as is Private Dunham). Obvious villains are purposely misleading (Bauvais), while initially neutral characters turn out to be the true "bad guys" (Colonel Wharton). Finally, the episode resorts to a tired, over-used cliché with the young boy, Chester. He helps Mulder and Scully, then runs away. Later, of course, Chester turns out to have been dead for weeks. (So, was he real? If not, why did he run? Why not just disappear!?) The presence of Chester in the story is another poor gimmick that fails to serve the plot in any way.

The standard plot of "Fresh Bones" also contains another confusing appearance by Mr. X. Why is he offering to help Mulder again? Even Mulder is confused! (This forced plot twist also contains some of the series' worst dialogue, when Mr. X describes the plight of the Haitians by declaring, "The Statue of Liberty is on vacation.") Perhaps the actor's contract called for X number of appearances, and they were one short, so they threw him in here.

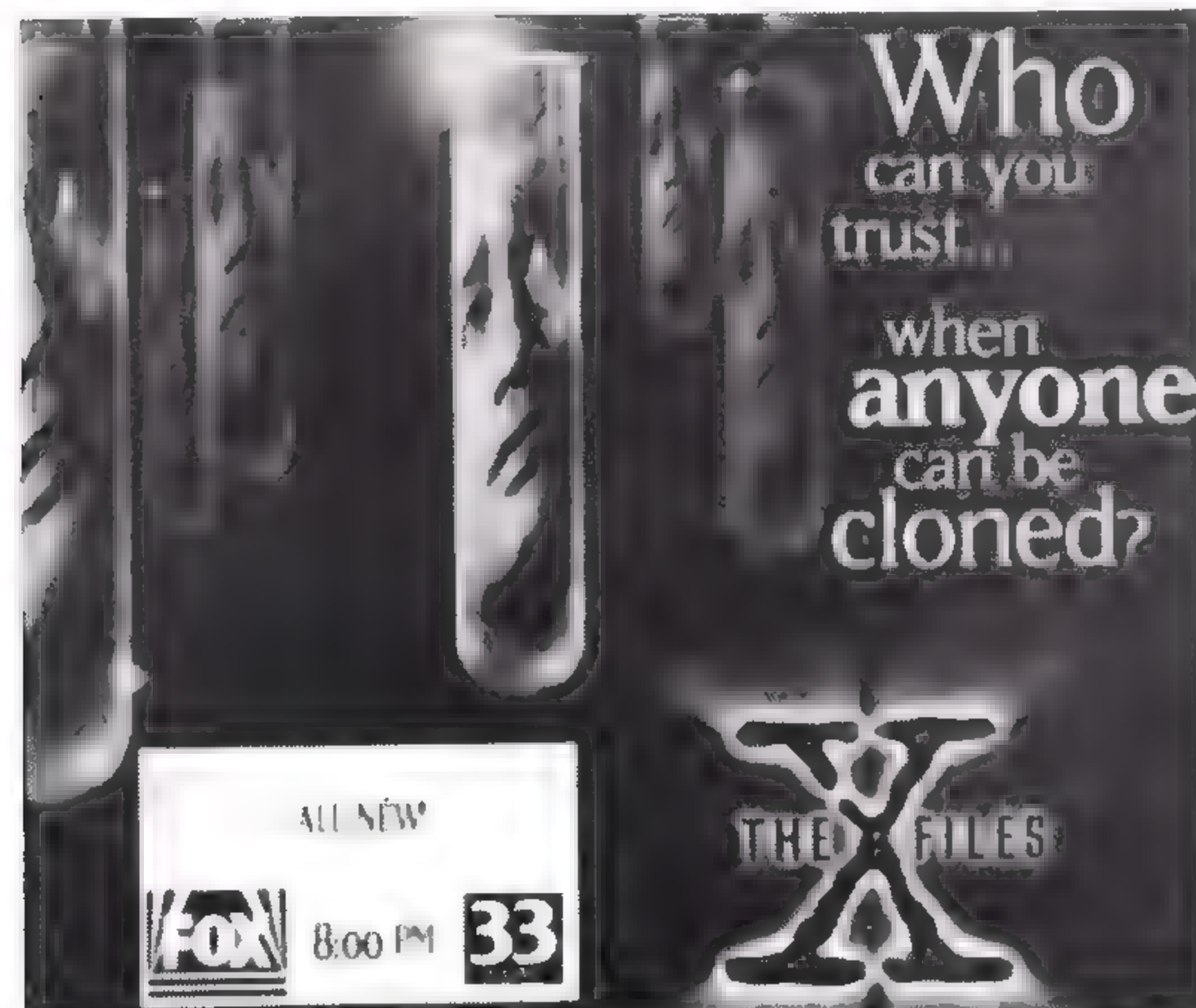
RATING: ○○○

16. COLONY

First televised February 10, 1995

Guest Starring Peter Donat (Mulder's Father), Brian Thompson (Pilot), Dana Gladstone (Dr. Prince/Gregors), Megan Leitch (Samantha), Tom Butler (CIA Agent), and Mitch Pileggi (Walter Skinner), Co-Starring Tim Henry (Federal Marshal), Andrew Johnston (Agent Weiss), Rebecca Toolan (Mrs. Mulder), Ken Roberts (Motel Proprietor), Michael Rogers (1st Crewman), and Oliver Becker (2nd Doctor), Featuring James Leard, Linden Banks, Bonnie Hay, Kim Restell, Richard Sargent, and David L. Gordon, Teleplay by Chris Carter, Story by David Duchovny & Chris Carter, Directed by Nick Marck.

Intro: Mulder is helicoptered to a hospital. He has learned that extraterrestrials are, indeed, on earth. He's suffering from extreme hypothermia. Scully bursts in and says the cold is all that's saving him. **Act 1:** Two weeks



Mulder and Scully in the graveyard ("Fresh Bones")

Photo by Ken Stamforth © 1995 Fox Broadcasting

earlier, in the Arctic Circle, a research vessel checks out a crashed UFO. At an abortion clinic in Scranton, Pennsylvania, a Russian pilot (later revealed to be an alien) stabs a doctor (who bleeds green blood) and burns the place. Mulder researches recent deaths of three doctors, all of whom look almost alike. A doctor in Syracuse, Aaron Baker, may be in danger. Mulder notifies the FBI field office, but too late. The alien kills the doctor (who "melts" into green ooze) as FBI Agent Weiss arrives. Mulder and Scully arrive as the agent (the alien in disguise) leaves. The real Weiss is in his car trunk, dead. **Act 2:** Skinner holds Mulder partly responsible for Weiss's death. Mulder is confused—he saw the agent alive. Ambrose Chapel from the CIA tells Mulder about Russian cloning technology; some are in this country. All clones are code-named Gregor. A Russian spy-killer is killing the Gregors. But Ambrose is actually the alien and is seeking more Gregors to kill. Mulder, Scully, and Ambrose visit one doctor who flees when he sees Ambrose; he jumps out a window (several stories off the ground) but gets up and walks away. Mulder chases and gets hit by a car. The alien (as Ambrose) catches the doctor and kills him. **Act 3:** Scully doesn't trust Ambrose; Mulder thinks he's the real thing; Scully checks out a Dr. James Dickson—his lab is in disrepair, and there's green slime on the floor. She thinks she's in danger. Mulder visits his Dad at Martha's Vineyard, West Tisbury, Massachusetts. Samantha is there. **Act 4:** Samantha tells Mulder she was returned at nine or ten years old; she was placed with a family and didn't remember the Mulders until later during regression hypnotherapy. She says she's in danger—her adoptive parents are aliens, and a bounty hunter has been sent to kill them, and her too. The bounty hunter can disguise himself as anyone; Mulder can't recognize him, but she can. Scully realizes she can't trust Ambrose. She returns to Dickson's lab and finds the doctor—with three others, the last remaining ones. She sends them off to maximum security protection. But the bounty hunter finds them. Scully is staying at a motel; Mulder arrives—at the same time that she gets a call from him. "To be continued"

COMMENTS: "Colony" is a compelling, urgently paced story that is influenced by the film *Terminator 2* (both have shape-shifting antagonists who desperately pursue their targeted prey). The episode contains some striking images. One memorable scene is that of a fallen, battered "Gregor" lifting himself up and running away after having just jumped out of a high-rise window!

Scully's cautious investigation of the warehouse is another simple, yet powerful, scene. Moving through shadows with her gun drawn, she suddenly steps in green ooze. This one simple scene combines two cult film genres—science fiction and hard-boiled pulp. Scenes like this classify *The*

X-Files as a unique new genre—call it “Science Fiction Noir.”

During Scully's capture in “Irresistible” she had visions of a silhouetted alien and a shape-shifting human male. Could this vision (and Scully's earlier abduction) tie into the alien in “Colony”? That question is neither addressed in this episode nor resolved by season's end. Still, the notion of Scully having some prior knowledge of the shape-shifter is intriguing.

Despite these beautiful surface touches, “Colony” still contains a hollow core. In an effort to maintain the episode's desperate pace, the writers seems willing to let Scully, Mulder—and even the laws of physics—abandon all logic. “Colony” contains too many implausibilities. For example, a car slams into Mulder, who first bounces off the windshield, then the car hood, then onto the hard pavement. But, according to Mulder, he only got the wind knocked out of him! Mulder's sudden trust of Chapel and his claims that Scully is paranoid are out of character. Scully even confronts Mulder about it; their resulting argument is artificial and unconvincing—a mere contrivance to introduce tension between the characters. (Actually, despite Deep Throat's dying words, Mulder's motto this season seems to be, “Trust Everyone.” He trusts Scully, Sen. Matheson, Mr. X, Krycek, Chapel, Duane Barry, Skinner occasionally, the “Samantha” clone, the Bounty Hunter about whether Samantha is alive, and would-be vampire Kristen. Obviously a person cannot go through life trusting nobody, but outside of Scully and perhaps Skinner and Matheson, it's unrealistic for Mulder to trust anyone else on the list at this time.) Scully and Mulder's “phone tag” is also unconvincing. Why didn't Mulder just call Scully's cell phone? Why did Scully tell Mulder where she was staying before she even checked in? For that matter, why did Scully announce her secret destination on a crowded public bus? Poorly conceived plot points such as these taken separately are irritating, but taken together are just bad storytelling.

WRITER'S BLOCK: We've already listed a number of the episode's unconvincing plot elements, but here's one more: When Scully investigates the warehouse she sees the alien—in the guise of CIA agent Chapel—smashing the clone vats. Why did the alien maintain his Chapel form? He was unafraid of using his “Russian pilot” form in public before, and he didn't expect Scully to find him there. (The answer, of course, is that the Chapel guise was convenient for the story.)

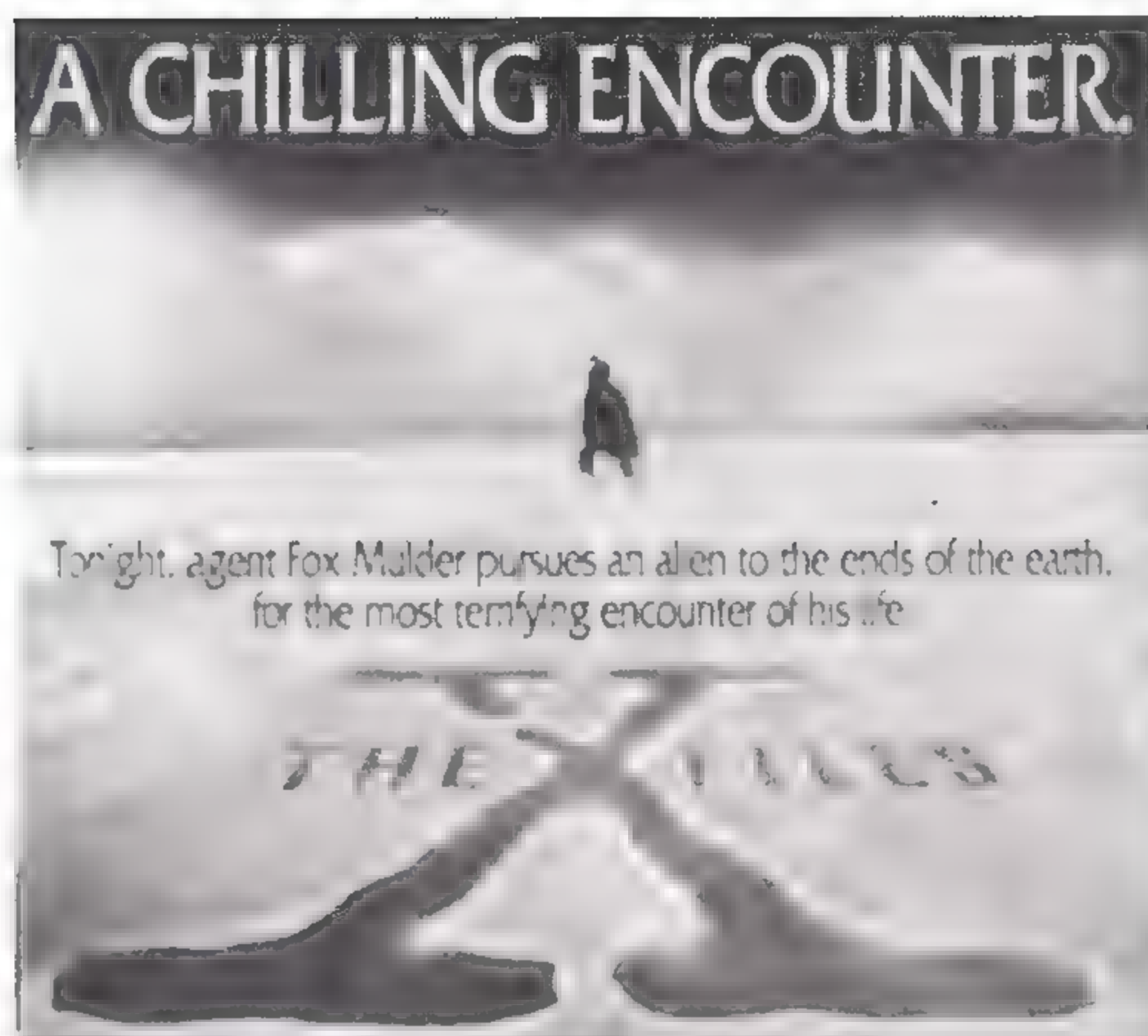
RATING: 

17. END GAME

First televised February 17, 1995

Guest Starring Steven Williams (Mr. X), Peter Donat (Mulder's Father), Brian Thompson (Pilot), Megan Leitch (Samantha Mulder), Colin Cunningham, and Mitch Pileggi (Walter Skinner) Co-Starring Garry Davey (Captain), Andrew Johnston (Agent Weiss), and Allan Lysell (Able Gardner), Featuring J. B. Bivens, Oliver Becker, Beatrice Zeilinger, and Bonnie Hay Written by Frank Spotnitz, Directed by Rob Bowman

Intro: In Beaufort Sea, USS *Allegiance*, attempts to investigate a strange aircraft. The reactor goes down; they'll try to surface. **Act 1:** At Vacation Village Motorlodge in Germantown, Maryland, Scully is attacked by the fake Mulder (the alien pilot). Later, Mulder arrives, but Scully's already gone. Samantha says the bounty hunter will offer to trade Scully for her. The only



way he can be killed is piercing the base of skull. His blood is toxic to humans. Earth is being colonized by aliens. The bounty hunter was sent to kill them—they were doing unsanctioned experiments combining human and alien DNA. On a Maryland bridge, Samantha is traded for Scully. A sharpshooter hits the bounty hunter, who falls over bridge—while holding onto Samantha. **Act 2:** The river is searched. Mulder goes to a Rockville, Maryland abortion clinic. Samantha (only) is pulled from the lake, but then “melts” green. At the clinic, Mulder meets several more Samanthas—one says they know where the real one is. The bounty hunter attacks. **Act 3:** The clinic is on fire. Mulder is saved, but no women are found. Scully discovers that agent Weiss died from an unknown virus causing thickening of the blood; the virus is knocked out by cold. Mulder meets with Mr. X. He tells Mulder the bounty hunter will be taken care of; Mulder needs to pick his battles carefully, and he can't win this one. Scully meets with Skinner—neither know where Mulder is. Skinner says he can't help her; he doesn't know, and he's upset at Mulder, anyway. Scully returns to Mulder's apartment and signals for Mr. X. X arrives, sees Scully, and begins to leave; he won't say where Mulder is. Skinner confronts X in elevator and demands to know where Mulder is; Skinner then tells Scully. **Act 4:** Mulder locates the sub that's broken through the ice. Inside, he finds and battles the bounty hunter, who says that Samantha is alive. Mulder shoots; green blood falls on him. Mulder gets pushed outside onto the ice; the sub submerges. Scully finds Mulder in the hospital (the “Colony” intro scene) and tells the doctors the cold is all that's keeping him alive. After transfusions and anti-viral agents, Mulder is saved. At his bedside, Scully is comforted that science saved him. The bounty hunter and sub are never located. Mulder has faith

The X-Files Radio Commercials

Aired before “Colony”

Announcer: “On a brand new X-Files—”

Man: “I have a story to tell, Agent Mulder. Believe me, you want to hear it.”

Announcer: “—FBI Agents Scully and Mulder uncover a conspiracy to create a master race.”

Scully: “Are you saying these men are clones?”

Announcer: “Now, no one is safe.”

Mulder: “Your life may be in danger.”

Announcer: “And no one can be trusted—”

Scully: “I think I've been followed.”

Announcer: “—not even your own partner.”

SFX: crash

Scully: “Mulder?”

SFX: gun cocks

Scully: “Freeze!”

SFX: two gunshots

Announcer: “The X-Files, Golden Globe winner for best dramatic

series, after a brand new *MANTIS* tonight on Fox.”

Aired before “End Game”

Announcer: “On *The X-Files*, FBI Agent Fox Mulder tracks an alien killer to the Arctic Circle.”

Mr. X: “This is a battle you can't win.”

Announcer: “But here, in the most desolate place on Earth, the hunter is about to become the hunted!”

Alien: “I could have killed you many times before.”

Mulder: “Who are you?”

Announcer: “And Mulder will come face to face with the most terrifying experience of his life.”

Mulder: “Stop!”

SFX: two gunshots

SFX: man screaming

SFX: crash

Announcer: “The X-Files, after *MANTIS*, two brand new episodes tonight on Fox.”

to keep looking.

COMMENTS: "Endgame" has the daunting task of resolving many, if not all, the unresolved questions and hanging plot threads of "Colony." Unfortunately "Endgame" is just as poorly conceived as its predecessor. By the time the episode is over there are more questions than answers in a storyline that makes little logistic sense. Even Rob Bowman's wonderful direction cannot save an episode doomed to failure by the shaky premise of "Colony."

Samantha spends a fair amount of time convincing Mulder she's his sister. She weaves an elaborate tale of her abduction and return to Earth. Then she dies and reveals her true nature to Mulder. Why go to all the trouble to concoct such an elaborate ruse? Why didn't she (and the other "Samantha" clones) tell Mulder the truth from the beginning? If the clones know so much about Mulder (enough to know that he and Samantha used to play "Stratego") that they are able to fake the reappearance of his sister, then surely they would know how passionate Mulder is to understand the truth about extraterrestrial intelligence on Earth. Mulder would be the first person to help these aliens. But the plan to gain Mulder's confidence backfires. He refuses to help once he discovers he has been fooled.

And isn't "Samantha's" final note to Mulder a risk? She tells him to seek out the other clones in case she dies or they become separated. But surely she knows that Mulder would lead the bounty hunter to the secret location (which he does!). The clones—and the "original Samantha"—would have been far safer if Mulder never knew of their existence. Why they bothered to contact him in the first place is truly a mystery. (The excuse that he could help them is weak.) The whole plot concerning Samantha is explained as a manipulation of Mulder, when in fact it is a prime example of manipulation of the viewer.

Scully's actions (or inactions) are also hard to accept. She's desperate to find Mulder but meekly accepts Skinner's brusque brush-off. Later, she goes to great lengths to contact Mr. X, but once he arrives she just lets him walk away! Scully has shown great determination in the past; it's hard to believe she wouldn't try to stop Mr. X, or at least follow him!

Why did the U.S. Navy allow a nuclear submarine to sit abandoned in an ice field? The cold war may be over, but surely the United States would attempt to protect such a valuable piece of equipment. Mr. X explains to Mulder that the government knows about the bounty hunter and will try to stop him from leaving Earth. If that's the case why not remove the submarine before he could get to it? They knew where it was—after all, Mr. X gave Mulder and Skinner the coordinates.

"Endgame" suffers from the "cotton candy" effect—it looks like much more than it really is. The story of "Colony" and "Endgame" add up to very little. It delivers a bundle of new questions but precious few answers. If the makers of "Colony" and "Endgame" had concentrated on character-oriented stories instead of fast-paced action stories, they might have created an episode with far more impact and import. As it stands, "Colony" and "Endgame" add nothing to either characters of Mulder or Scully and do little to expand *The X-Files* universe. Instead, the episodes tell us what we already expected—that Mulder's sister is still alive. The story ends with Scully renewing her faith in science, and Mulder renewing his faith to keep looking. After "Endgame," the characters and the viewers are back to square one. Of all the incomprehensible aspect of this storyline, this is the hardest to swallow.

WRITER'S BLOCK: Why did Mr. X come to Mulder's apartment when Scully sent the signal? (For that matter, when has Mr. X ever come to Mulder's apartment? For someone who wants to keep a safe distance from Mulder, he sure is taking a chance!) Mr. X knows Mulder is gone (he ends up giving Skinner Mulder's destination), but seems surprised and upset that Scully greets him at the door. This poorly executed "plot twist" underscores the episode's loose storyline as well as the weakness of the Mr. X character. Likewise, the elevator fight between X and Skinner was exciting—but really silly.

RATING: ☹☹☹



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18. FEARFUL SYMMETRY

First televised February 24, 1995

Guest Starring Jayne Atkinson (Willa Ambrose), Lance Guest (Kyle Lang), and Jack Rader (Ed Meecham). Co-Starring Bruce Harwood (Byers), Tom Braidwood (Frohike), and Jody St. Michael (Sophie). Featuring Charles Andre, Garvin Cross, and Tom Glass, Written by Steve DeJarnatt; Directed by James Whitmore, Jr

Intro: In Fairfield, Idaho, an invisible elephant appears to go on a rampage through town. Later, a truck driver sees an elephant roaming down the street; eventually, dies on the road. **Act 1:** Mulder and Scully inspect the wreckage. Mulder thinks it's an invisible elephant. Ed Meecham from the zoo says the elephant's cage was still locked. Mulder and Scully talk with Willa Ambrose, the zoo's naturalist, and Kyle Lang, head of a local WAO (Wild Again Organization) animal "liberation" group. It claims Meecham's been torturing animals. Scully thinks WAO set the elephant free. A WAO member sneaks into the zoo that night to videotape animals in cages. There's a bright light; a tiger disappears and attacks the guy while the camera runs. **Act 2:** Scully questions Lang. Mulder and Scully talk with Ambrose and her pet gorilla Sophie (who has a one-thousand-word vocabulary—and paints, too!). Sophie is afraid of the light. This zoo has never had a successful pregnancy. Scully discovers that the rampaging elephant had been pregnant. In downtown Boise, a tiger roams a construction site. The tiger charges Ambrose; Meecham shoots it. **Act 3:** The zoo's funding gets cut off; the animals are being shipped out to other zoos. Scully learns the tiger was pregnant. Mulder tells Ambrose he thinks aliens are abducting animals and impregnating them, but having trouble returning them. Mulder and Ambrose "talk" with Sophie—"Baby go flying light." Police arrive with a court order to release Sophie. Scully discovers Ambrose and Lang were together responsible for bringing Sophie to the US. Late that night, Lang is at the zoo looking for Ambrose. Sophie's cage is empty; Lang is attacked. **Act 4:** Mulder and Scully question Ambrose, who is uncooperative. Mulder thinks she killed Lang. That night, Mulder follows Meecham, who took Sophie at Ambrose's request. He denies killing Lang. Sophie is throwing herself against the wall; Mulder goes in the cage to lure Sophie into the light so Meecham can hit her with tranquilizer. Meecham locks Mulder in the cage. There's a bright light; Sophie disappears. Scully arrives; Meecham is arrested. Sophie's message to Mulder: "Man save man." Sophie is found after being hit by a car. Ambrose and Meecham will be charged with the murder of Lang. Mulder believes aliens were worried about extinction of various species.

COMMENTS: "Fearful Symmetry" contains a potentially interesting story, but the episode's poorly conceived premise and practically nonexistent ending seriously diminish it. "Fearful Symmetry," like so many *X-Files* episodes, fails to deliver any kind of satisfactory resolution.

"Fearful Symmetry" starts out strong. The episode's teaser, with the invisible elephant smashing through a city street, is powerful and exciting; and the elephant's sad death is truly moving. In only a few minutes, "Fearful Symmetry" manages to engage the viewer on an intellectual and emotional



level.

The plot of "Fearful Symmetry"—alien abduction of zoo animals—is refreshing; it presents a logical and satisfactory twist on *The X-Files*' penchant for alien abduction stories. The abduction of zoo animals is an intriguing concept. After all, if aliens are capturing human beings, why wouldn't they also take other forms of animal life? It also makes sense that the aliens would select their animal abductees from a remote zoo where a wide variety of animals would be readily available. Here, the writers have worked out the logistics of their backstory!

Unfortunately they fail to work out some of the logistics of their main story. As "Fearful Symmetry" builds toward a climax, the viewer is waiting for some sort of payoff, some answer to the episode's many questions. Little, if any, resolution to Sophie's plight, or the true reason behind the animals' disappearances (and pregnancies) is provided. We're fairly sure that aliens are behind these events, but we want to know what's happening (even if Mulder and Scully never do). The show's writers use its "occasionally serial" nature of the series as a crutch. This storyline is left open and unresolved. If *The X-Files* were a true serial—a program that paid constant attention to its ongoing storylines—the writers would be forced to provide a satisfactory explanation to this subplot. But instead of thoroughly plotting their story (which would require them to provide some sort of ending!) they take the easy way out and stop the story when the episode runs out of time. Will we ever see an episode return to this plotline? Probably not.

Despite the fatal flaws of "Fearful Symmetry," the episode is beautifully directed and contains some wonderful stylistic touches. The show presents images that stay with the viewer long after the episode is over. One striking image is the death of the WAO activist. His gruesome attack by the invisible tiger is reflected in the lens of his dropped video camera. This ghostly reflection shows the activist being dragged and thrown about like a puppet on invisible strings.

NOTE: The title of the episode is not referred to in the show. It is taken from a William Blake poem, "The Tyger," which begins:

*Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?*

WRITER'S BLOCK: If the animals are taken by aliens then returned miles away from the zoo, why did the tiger reappear just outside his cage? For that matter, why were the animals invisible to begin with? This is what instigated the story, yet the writer seems to have forgotten about it by the end of the episode. There are also some (unintentionally, it appears) hilarious incidents depicted. Mulder is actually serious about obtaining information from Sophie the gorilla! His explanation: we always want to talk to the witnesses, and she was a witness! *The X-Files* meets *Doctor Dolittle*? Then we get to see Sophie's "paintings," where Ambrose points to a blotch on the paper and informs Mulder and Scully, "That's a baby." Oh really!

RATING: 

19. DOD KALM

First televised March 10, 1995

Guest Starring John Savage (Trondheim), David Cubitt (Barclay), and Vladimir Kulich (Olafsson), Co-Starring Stephen Dimopoulos (Ionesco), Claire Riley (Nurse), Robert Metcalfe (Burke), and Dmitry Chepovetsky



(Lt. Richard Harper), Teleplay by Howard Gordon & Alex Gansa; Story by Howard Gordon; Directed by Rob Bowman.

Intro: In the Norwegian Sea, members of the *USS Arden* mutiny so they "won't end up like the others." They sail away aboard a small lifeboat. Eighteen hours later, a Canadian fishing vessel finds them; everyone on board has become very old. **Act 1:** In Bethesda, Maryland, Scully tries to talk with the lone lifeboat survivor but is kicked out of his hospital room. Mulder tells her about a "wrinkle in time" in the Norwegian Sea. They're off to investigate. Henry Trondheim will navigate the boat. They run into the 1991 *Arden* destroyer. The crew is dead and mummified, and the ship is corroded. Then Trondheim's ship gets stolen, stranding Mulder, Scully, and Trondheim on the Destroyer. **Act 2:** Mulder thinks they've stumbled upon a government experiment to speed time. The group finds Trondheim's first mate with his skull fractured. Then they find the *Arden*'s Capt. Barkley; he's very old. He tells them what happened—bright light, time got lost. Another man on board, Olafsson, attacks Trondheim, but Mulder intervenes. Olafsson is a pirate whaler; he's not old. Barkley dies. Mulder and Scully begin to age quickly. **Act 3:** Olafsson offers to tell Trondheim his secret if Trondheim will let him go. Mulder and Scully discover rats near the ship's water storage container. This water, separate from the sea's, must prevent the aging. But the supply is low. Meanwhile, Trondheim is drinking from another supply on the ship. **Act 4:** Mulder and Scully discover that Olafsson has escaped. Trondheim tries to hoard water for himself. Scully says the Navy knows where they are and will be there soon. The ship's outer hold is corroding through; water rushes in and drowns Trondheim. (The inner hold is okay for now.) Mulder loses consciousness, but Scully continues her journal. Scully passes out. Rescuers arrive. Thirty-six hours later, Scully awakens. Scully's notebook helped doctors to revive her and Mulder. The ship sank less than an hour after the rescue.

COMMENTS: "Dod Kalm" is one of those episode of *The X-Files* that leaves a lackluster first impression, but which, upon subsequent viewings, proves to be a strong, well-plotted story with good characterization.

The producers of *The X-Files* seem to delight in finding new places in which to strand Mulder and Scully; these two FBI agents have been in some of the most remote locales imaginable. Up until now, the episode "Ice" (from the first season) most successfully conveyed the frightening nature of true

The X-Files Ratings

Here are the ratings for *The X-Files* as compiled by the A.C. Nielsen Co. The first number is the placement of the episode during that week's broadcasts (which run from Monday through Sunday). Following the episode's title are two numbers. The first (in boldface) is the "rating," which measures the percentage of the nation's 95.4 million television homes tuned into the program. Each ratings point represents 954,000 households. The second number, the "share," is the percentage of televisions actually in use during that hour that were tuned into the program. The listing below is for first-run episodes, not reruns.


42. Little Green Men (9/16/94)	10.3 /19	42. Red Museum (12/9)	10.4 /18	35. Dod Kalm (3/10)	10.7 /18
59. The Host (9/23/94)	9.8 /17	61. Excelsis Dei (12/16)	8.9 /15	41. Humbug (3/31)	10.3 /18
65. Blood (9/30/94)	9.1 /16	62. Aubrey (1/6/95)	10.2 /16	50. The Calusari (4/14)	8.3 /16
65. Sleepless (10/7/94)	8.6 /15	65. Irresistible (1/13)	9.2 /15	52. F. Emasculata (4/28)	8.9 /16
68. Duane Barry (10/14)	8.9 /16	35. Die Hand Die Verletzt (1/27)	10.7 /18	49. Soft Light (5/5)	8.5 /15
59. Ascension (10/21)	9.6 /16	33. Fresh Bones (2/3)	11.3 /19	41. Our Town (5/12)	9.4 /17
57. 3 (11/4)	9.4 /16	55. Colony (2/10)	10.3 /17	35. Anasazi (5/19)	10.1 /18
57. One Breath (11/11)	9.5 /16	36. End Game (2/17)	11.2 /19	NOTE <i>The X-Files</i> won its Golden Globe award on January 21, 1995.	
68. Firewalker (11/18)	9.0 /16	54. Fearful Symmetry (2/24)	10.1 /17		

isolation. ("Darkness Falls" and "Firewalker" strived, but failed, to capture the isolation and "aloneness" of "Ice.") "Dod Kalm" surpasses the isolation of "Ice" with its remote, fog-bound ghost ship, lost somewhere in the North Atlantic. Further, the ship on which Mulder and Scully find themselves stranded is going to sink. Alone and unaccounted for, Mulder and Scully must also face the threat of rapid, unnatural aging. Clearly, "Dod Kalm" presents a situation of despair and defeat for the show's protagonists.

Mulder recognizes their predicament and seemingly gives up. He breaks down and complains that the situation is "not fair," that they "still have so much left to do." Scully, enlightened by her ordeal in "One Breath," is unafraid of death and comforts Mulder with a gentle caress. These simple actions speak volumes about the strength of Mulder and Scully's relationship and reveal more about each character. Mulder has not yet found what he has so desperately been searching for, while Scully, whose own personal searches have been less obsessive, has seemingly found the faith she needs in order to cope with life (and death). (This faith seems to stem from her near-death experience in "One Breath" even though Scully questions the existence of such faith in "Irresistible.") The ending of "Dod Kalm" succeeds because it focuses on the characters as well as their predicament. Too often *The X-Files* abandons characterization in favor of plot twists and surprise endings. Ironically the climax of "Dod Kalm" is stronger than that of "Endgame," which deliberately attempts (but fails) to add deeper characterization to Mulder and Scully.

A number of subtle touches make "Dod Kalm" a success. For example, the writers provide Trondheim with an apt and ironic fate—he ends up drowning in the water he sought to keep for himself! And Rob Bowman presents a striking and evocative ending as the Navy Rescue Team searches the ship. The scene opens with a wonderful tracking shot, accompanied only by music and no other sound; the effect is one of a higher power delivering Mulder and Scully to safety.

WRITER'S BLOCK: Mulder mentions the concept of a "wormhole" to Scully who reacts with confusion. But Scully has a degree in physics—she probably knows more about wormholes than Mulder! What happened Olafsson at the end? A brief shot of his slumped-over body indicates that Trondheim might have killed him, although Trondheim claims he got away, and Mulder notices his severed ropes but doesn't bother to look for him. Finally Scully explains that Mulder's aging is exacerbated by his dehydration while Barclay's liquor drinking kept him alive. Yet alcohol causes extreme dehydration; are we to suppose he has survived primarily on alcohol all this time?

RATING: 

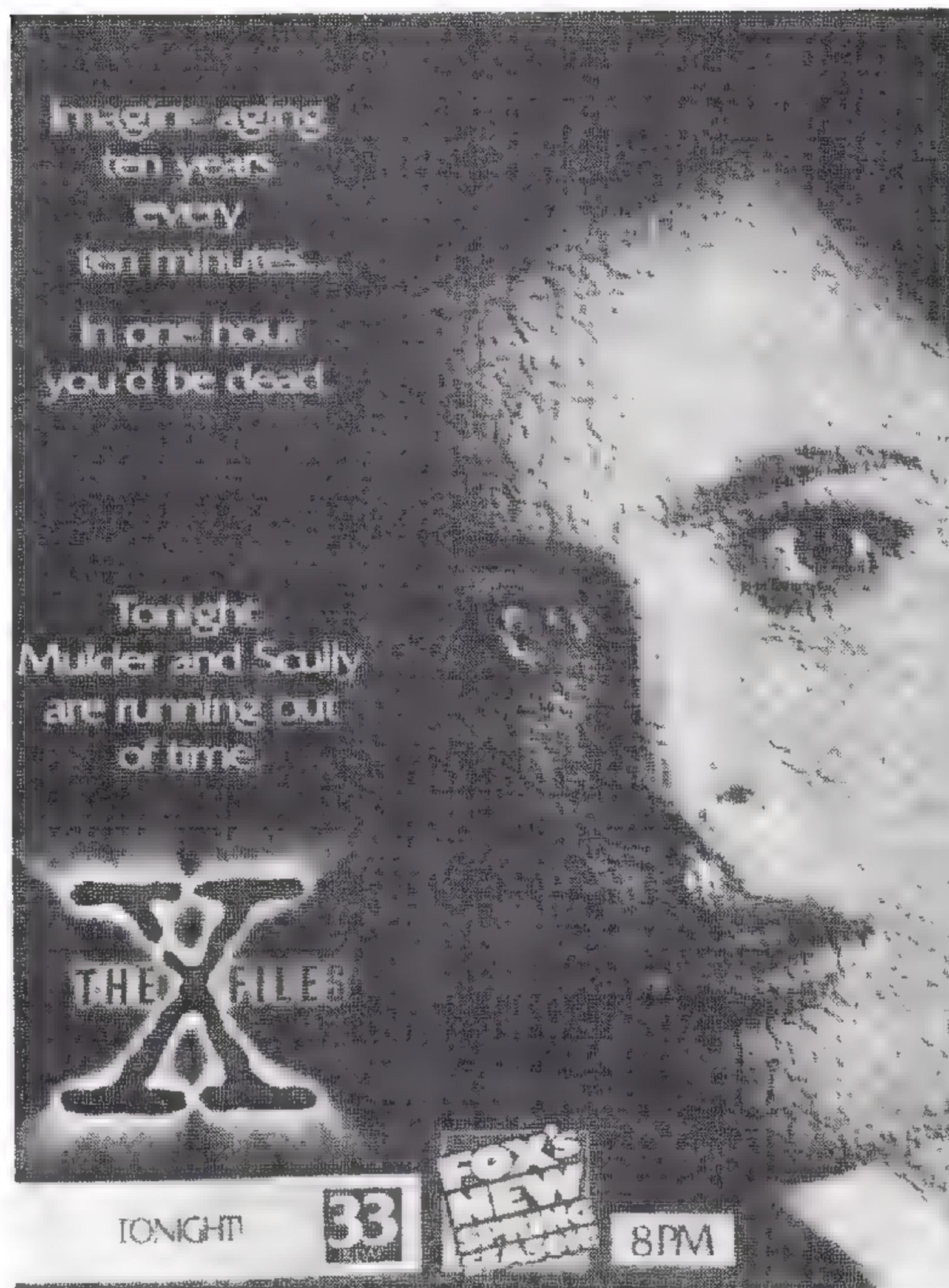
20. HUMBUG

First televised March 31, 1995

Guest Starring Jim Rose (Dr. Blockhead), Wayne Grace (Sheriff), Michael Anderson (Gulf Breeze Manager), The Enigma (Conundrum), and Vincent Schiavelli (Lanny), Co-Starring Alex Diakun (Curator), John Payne (Jerald Glazebrook), Gordon Tipple (Hepcat Helm), Alvin Law (Reverend), Written by Darin Morgan; Directed by Kim Manners

Intro: In Gibsonton, Florida, an Alligator Man is attacked in his back yard swimming pool. **Act 1:** Mulder and Scully attend Alligator Man's burial. He worked the sideshow circuit. Mulder and Scully visit Hepcat Helm, a local artist who operates a "funhouse"—or "tabernacle of terror." He says Bamum was a genius because "you never know where the truth ends and the humbug begins." Mulder and Scully stay at the Gulf Breeze trailer park. Lanny carries their luggage—his "brother" is attached to him. A little monster attacks Hepcat. **Act 2:** Mulder and Scully investigate the crime scene. Later, they meet Mr. Blockhead (body manipulator) and Conundrum (eats everything). Mulder and Scully run background checks on various people. **Act 3:** A little monster attacks the Gulf Breeze manager, Mr. Nutt. Mulder and Scully arrest Mr. Blockhead. Lanny, locked up in the drunk tank, screams in horror. **Act 4:** Lanny's twin brother, Leonard, keeps disjoining and attacking others (Leonard wants another brother). Mulder can't quite believe it. Mulder and Scully track Leonard in the funhouse. They follow it outside. Leonard attacks Conundrum—but ends up getting eaten! Lanny dies during the night. The next morning, Blockhead and Conundrum drive off.

COMMENTS: "Humbug" is one of the better episodes of *The X-Files*, and certainly a standout for Season Two. The episode is purposely played for laughs, and indeed, the show has some of the funniest lines and most outrageous situations ever seen on *The X-Files*. But the humorous nature of "Humbug" is not immediately evident. The episode starts out like so many others—a gruesome death connected to some unknown phenomenon



brings Mulder and Scully to Gibsonton to investigate. Everything appears "normal" for an *X-Files* story, and the characters treat their situation with their usual grim determination. But shortly after Mulder and Scully arrive in Gibsonton, things begin to get a little quirky.

From the funeral of The Alligator Man, to Sheriff Hamilton's dry demeanor, to Mr. Nutt's telling evaluation of Mulder, the episode's wry humor becomes more and more apparent. Viewers are initially caught off guard to the comedic nature of the story, tricked by the skilled manipulative talents of the writers. In countless past episodes the audience has been set up to expect one thing, but ends up getting another. Usually such gimmicky tricks undermine otherwise good stories. But "Humbug" is supposed to be a joke, and so when the writers set us up for a serious, horrific tale, but then deliver a lighthearted and hilarious farce, we are rewarded with a skillful piece of storytelling.

As the main plot of the killings maintains a steady pace, the humor in "Humbug" also builds. David Duchovny is allowed to show off his comic sensibilities (a talent he has demonstrated in many other *X-Files* episodes, but never with the freedom he is allowed in "Humbug"). Duchovny's dry, deadpan delivery proves he has a keen sense of comic timing. As the funeral of the Alligator Man dissolves into chaos, Mulder waits for the mourners to clear out, then turns to Scully and says, "I can't wait for the wake." When questioning Dr. Blockhead, Mulder recognizes the Conundrum from an earlier encounter. Then he questions his memory: "I could be mistaken, maybe it was another bald-headed, jigsaw-puzzle tattooed naked guy I saw." When caught digging in the backyard of Sheriff Hamilton, Mulder explains what he and Scully are doing: "We're exhuming your potato." These lines are all very funny, especially when delivered by a straight-faced Mulder.

"Humbug" is filled with other nice touches. The viewer never gets a good look at the curator of the Museum of Curiosities; his misshapen face is only shown in mirrored reflections. Scully actually solves the murder case, piecing together the relationship between Lanny and Leonard. Mulder is dumbfounded, speaking the uncharacteristic line, "What are you talking about?" when Scully reveals the killer's true identity. The episode ends with a perfect comedic resolution that meshes with what we already know about the Conundrum: he eats anything—including any kind of meat.

"Humbug" proves that the creative forces behind *The X-Files* have a

sense of humor about themselves and their work. The episode is a refreshing change of pace from the dark, moody, sometimes overly-violent nature of *The X-Files*. While the humor of "Humbug" would not fit in every episode, an occasional story with such a light-hearted tone is welcome. Hopefully there will be more "Humbugs" in the future.

WRITER'S BLOCK: At the end of Act 3, Lanny looks up and screams. We later learn that this is because of Leonard's detachment—yet it's happened before. Why the sudden terror?

RATING: ○○○○○

21. THE CALUSARI

First televised April 14, 1995

Guest Starring Helene Clarkson (Maggie Holvey), Joel Palmer (Charlie Holvey), Lilyan Chauvin (Golda), and Kay E. Kuter; Featuring Jacqueline Dandenbau, Bill Croft, Campbell Lane, and George Josef, Written by Sara B. Charno, Directed by Michael Vejar

Intro: At an amusement park in Virginia, a young boy, Charlie Holvey, is upset that his dad gave his balloon to his young brother. A mysterious force manipulates the balloon to fly over some train tracks. The little boy follows it and gets run over. **Act 1:** A photo analysis reveals a concentration of electromagnetic energy—a "poltergeist"—holding the balloon over the tracks. Mulder and Scully visit the child's parents. Mrs. Holvey's mother, Golda, lives there, too; she says something about a devil child. Charlie has had lots of illnesses ever since Golda moved in. Golda is very superstitious. Mr. Holvey ends up getting his tie caught in an electric garage door mechanism and hanging himself. **Act 2:** In the house, Scully sees occult ritualistic setup in Golda's room with two dead roosters. Mulder examines the garage door mechanism—ash is everywhere. A local college professor, Prof. Burke, says it's "holy ash"—materializes out of thin air. Golda conducts a ceremony in her room. Karen Kosseff, an FBI social worker (see "Irresistible"), comes by the home. Mrs. Holvey and Kosseff see the ceremony; Holvey kicks everyone out. But Golda grabs the boy and locks herself in the room. Mulder and Scully arrive. Golda gets knocked out; Charlie grabs the roosters and performs incantation over her. Mulder and co. burst into the room. **Act 3:** Charlie says he doesn't remember anything. Supposedly Golda died of heart attack, but her eyes were pecked out. Mulder finds more ash by her. Golda's friends "The Calusari"—in Rumania, they're responsible for the correct observance of sacred rites—tell Mrs. Holvey the evil is still in the house. Golda's ceremony was an attempt to cleanse the house of evil. Kosseff interviews Charlie, who blames Golda's death on Michael. He was Charlie's stillborn twin; Golda wanted to perform ritual of separation to divide the souls; otherwise, the world of the dead would follow Charlie. Later, in the hospital, a nurse gives Charlie a shot; Michael sneaks up behind and attacks the nurse. **Act 4:** Charlie (really Michael) leaves with his mother; Mulder and Scully find Charlie still in his room. At home, the mom nervously performs Golda's ceremony—she knows now it's Michael with her. Mulder gets the Calusari to go to Charlie's hospital room. He helps them perform the ceremony. At the house, Scully finds the mom suspended in air. Michael attacks Scully. The Calusari complete their ceremony. Mom drops to floor; Michael disappears. Mulder concludes neither innocence nor vigilance are protection against the howling heart of evil.

COMMENTS: The occult versus the occult—who are the good guys? This *Omen* inspired episode is another in an increasing number of *X-Files* episodes dealing with black magic or demon possession. All seem to fall into a similar pattern resulting in the contrived separation of Mulder and Scully in Act 4. Mulder's sending of Scully to the Holveys at the end of "The Calusari" reminds us of the worst horror movie clichés: going into the old house alone, *not* calling the police after discovering the first dead body, etc. As soon as Scully leaves Mulder, the viewer knows she will be walking into danger.

Maybe it was the recognizably weak script—the "split soul"/death-follows-Charlie stuff doesn't make any sense—but the characters seem to have little motivation or emotional involvement in the case. Both Mulder and Scully seem passively detached to all the killing and unusual events surrounding them. For example, as Charlie goes into a seizure, Mulder just stares at the boy as he is being subdued. Supposedly Mulder is contemplating the dangerous nature of Charlie, but it doesn't come across. Mulder looks like his mind is on some other case.

The character of Doctor Burke is another example of the episode's poor conception. When we first see him, he is an expert computer programmer who knows everything about how to digitally enhance photographs. Later, of course, he becomes an expert on Indian mysticism,

knowing all there is to know about "budi," the (silly) substance which is neither organic nor inorganic (so what's left?!). The "holy ash" supposedly materializes out of thin air, which the professor compares to the "loaves and fishes" miracle and manages to confuse multiplication with materialization. And Scully must have been asleep during that lesson in her Catholic upbringing; she calls it a "parable"!

"The Calusari" fails to create any kind of tension. The actor playing Charlie/Michael is not menacing enough; his evil stares look more like selfish pouts. The episode builds to a painfully long exorcism scene which parallels Scully's dangerous encounter with Michael. But the whole climax of "The Calusari" is predictable and boring; made worse by the lengthy duration of the scene.

On the other hand, this episode is beautifully shot. The Calusari's ceremony on Charlie near the end—although lengthy—contains some effective photographic tricks that rival feature film work.

As it concludes, "The Calusari" is blatantly left open for a sequel. Let's hope they don't make one.

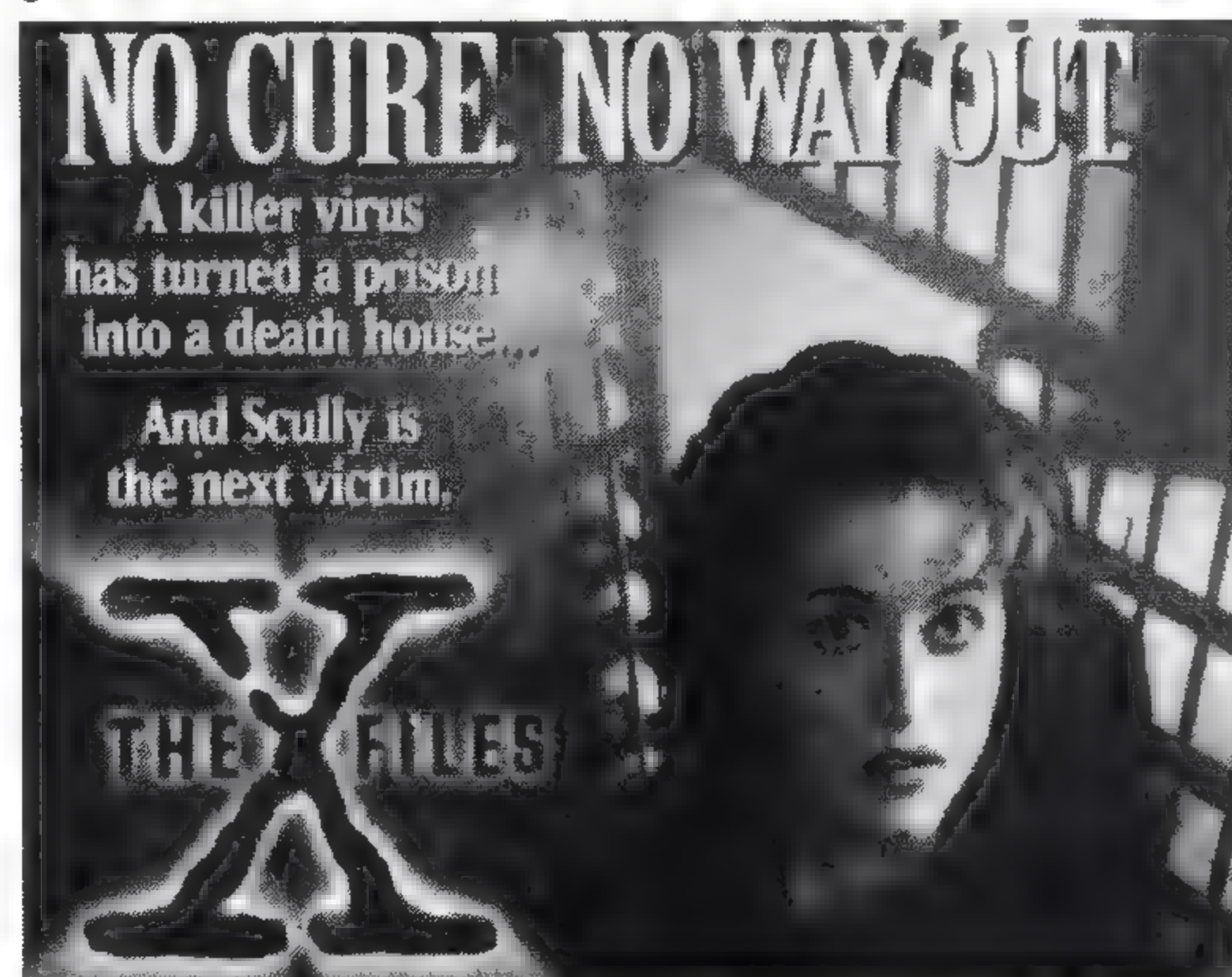
RATING: ○○○

22. F. EMASCULATA

First televised April 28, 1995

Guest Starring Charles Martin Smith (Dr. Osborne), Dean Norris (U.S. Marshal Tapia), John Pyper-Ferguson (Paul), William B. Davis (Smoking Man), Angelo Vacca (Angelo Garza), and Mitch Pileggi (Walter Skinner); Co-Starring Morris Panych (Dr. Simon Auerbach), Lynda Boyd (Elizabeth), John Tench (Steve), Alvin Sanders (Bus Driver); Featuring Kim Kondrashoff, Chilton Crane, Bill Rowat, Jude Zachary; Written by Chris Carter & Howard Gordon; Directed by Rob Bowman.

Intro: Scientist Robert Torrence, in a Costa Rican jungle, finds a dead elephant covered in boils; one pops and squirts onto him. That night, he radios for help—he's been infected. Seven hours later, soldiers find the doctor dead. **Act 1:** At a prison in Virginia, an inmate named "Robert Torrence" gets a package; it's an animal leg contaminated with a boil. Eighteen hours later, doctors work on him. Two prisoners escape. Mulder and Scully arrive to assist U.S. Marshals in the capture; the prison has been taken over by the national guard. Scully stays put and talks with CDC's Dr. Osborne—a deadly contagion has spread. Scully examines Torrence's body, ready to be burned. Osborne becomes infected. **Act 2:** Mulder and the Marshals find an infected gas station attendant; special quarantine doctors helicopter in and whisk the attendant away in a plastic container. Prisoners arrive at girlfriend's house. Scully traces package sent to prisoner from Pink Pharmaceuticals in Wichita, Kansas. Scully discovers a small bug in the boil of Torrence. The prisoner's boil bursts onto his girlfriend. Police burst in and find the girlfriend and dead prisoner, but the other one is gone. **Act 3:** Dr. Osborne actually works for Pink Pharmaceuticals. The Rain Forest explorer looking for new species sent *F. Emasculata* bugs—the same as what Scully found. The bug carries a deadly parasite. Pustules are full of larvae; when it bursts, the parasites attach to a new hosts. Mulder meets with Skinner and Smoking Man, who kept information from Mulder because it would only have slowed him down. Scully tells Mulder that Pink Pharmaceuticals is trying to clean up the mess quietly with help from the government. Mulder wants to alert the public; Scully says it's too early—it





would induce needless panic. Mulder learns the escaped prisoner is heading to Toronto. **Act 4:** The dying Osborne tells Scully this outbreak is not an isolated incident. Mulder and the Marshalls arrive at the bus station. Mulder gets on the bus. Mulder tells the prisoner that Pink was using him as a guinea pig, and he wants to know what was in the package. But the prisoner is shot before he can say anything. Mulder wants to go to the media with entire plot. Scully discovers the two Robert Torrences and says Pink covered its bases if they were found out—they could blame everything on a postal mistake. Skinner says Mulder never had a chance on this one; for every step forward, "They" are 3 steps ahead, and he should watch his back. **COMMENTS:** "F. Emasculation" comes at a time when stories about killer viruses (such as the book *The Hot Zone* and the film *Outbreak*) seem to be hot items. The plot of "F. Emasculation" very much resembles these stories: a new killer virus is discovered in the jungle, it makes its way onto U.S. soil, and the government does everything it can to contain a potential epidemic. The virus topic is rich with story potential, and although "F. Emasculation" varies little from the plots of other virus stories, it is still a well-done, exciting episode with important thematic elements.

The show tackles the larger theme of the public's right to know, a theme only hinted at in other episodes. Mulder believes the public should know the truth about the potential threat of the virus. Smoking Man disagrees, infuriating Mulder. But when Scully echoes some of the same concerns of Smoking Man—that news of a potential epidemic might cause a panic—Mulder begins to question what is right and wrong. This debate, while only dealt with tangentially, enriches the episode.

"F. Emasculation" is well made. Director Bowman again instills the episode with a number of cinematic touches. Bowman isn't afraid to make use of the entire screen, often setting up scenes with action in the background as well as the foreground. Take, for example, Mulder's scene in the phone booth. As he talks with an operator, a helicopter comes sweeping in behind Mulder to land in a nearby field. Such a scene takes precise choreography and timing, but the effort pays off—the result is a compelling episode filled with energy and action.

The episode's only real weak point is the overly dramatic confrontation between Mulder and Skinner at the end of Act 4. Skinner speaks the ominous words, "This is only the beginning," in reference to what Mulder has uncovered. But one has to wonder, "The beginning of what?" "F. Emasculation" hardly seems to break any new ground in terms of Mulder's investigations into government conspiracies. Skinner's melodramatic warning becomes meaningless when this episode is compared with the rest of the series.

WRITER'S BLOCK: Why was Scully, a medical doctor, so cavalier about cutting open a body bag near the prison incinerator? She saw people wearing protective suits, and she knew that there was a potential medical threat in the prison. But Scully seems unconcerned as she slits a gaping hole into the body bag of one of the corpses. Her irresponsible actions result in the death of Dr. Osborne. Smoking Man kept information from Mulder because it would "slow him down"—does that make sense? And how much did Skinner know? Did he purposefully make Mulder and Scully's mission more dangerous to themselves by withholding information he had? Danger comes with the territory, so why make things riskier than necessary unless

an attempt to quietly eliminate the two agents (how easy to blame it on a virus).

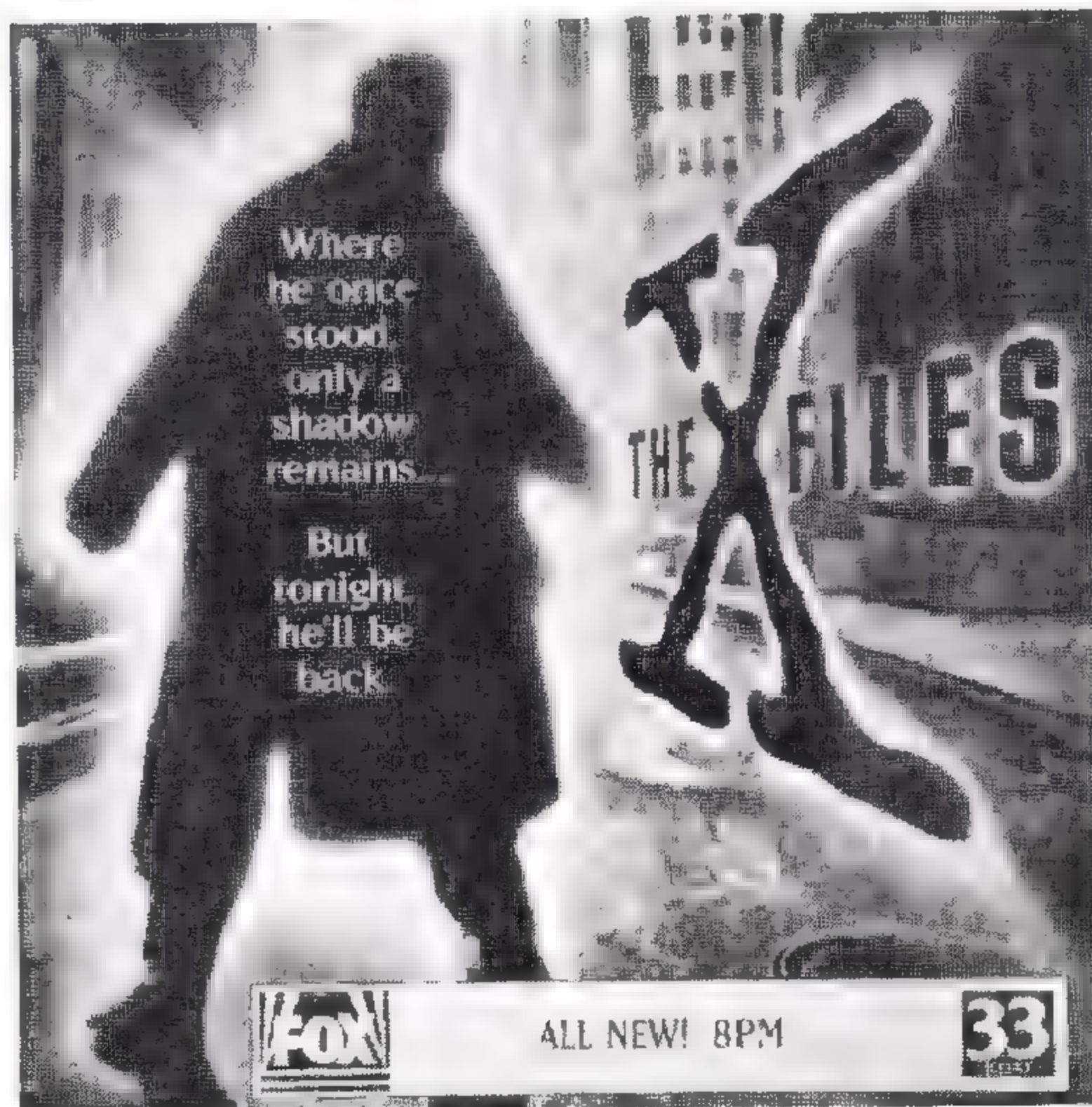
RATING: ○○○○

23. SOFT LIGHT

First televised May 5, 1995

Guest Starring Tony Shalhoub (Dr. Chester Banton), Kate Twa (Det. Kelly Ryan), Kevin McNulty (Dr. Christopher Davey), and Steven Williams (Mr. X); Co-Starring Nathaniel Deveau (Detective Barron), Robert Rozen (Doctor), and Donna Yamamoto (Night Nurse). Featuring Govie Fraizer, Steve Bacic, and Craig Brunanski. Written by Vince Gilligan, Directed by James Conner

Intro: In Richmond, Virginia, a man in a hotel room is disturbed by the another man (Dr. Banton) knocking on a door across the hall. The man looks out the peephole and sees Banton knocking. As Banton steps back, his shadow slides under the door and "swallows" the man, leaving a black scorch mark on the carpet. **Act 1:** Mulder and Scully investigate the man's disappearance. Detective Kelly Ryan, a former student of Scully's, is in charge of the case and other recent disappearances that may be connected. Det. Ryan shows them a scorch mark on the carpet. Mulder thinks it might be spontaneous combustion. He and Scully go to the home of the last missing person. Inside the house, they notice another scorch mark. Mulder thinks the missing people may have been killed, hunted by some unknown attacker. Mulder finds a used train ticket and suspects the deaths may be linked with someone at the train station. At the station, Banton looks for his shadow. He leaves and is stopped by two policemen. They get too close, and Banton's shadow swallows both. **Act 2:** Mulder and Scully arrive at the scene of the police disappearances. Mulder studies train station security video tapes and locates Banton. He's wearing a jacket from Polarity Magnetics. Mulder and Scully go to Polarity Magnetics and speak with Dr. Davy, Banton's partner. Davy explains that Banton had been conducting experiments with "dark matter" and subatomic particles. Banton had been caught in the particle target chamber during an accident. His shadow was burned into the wall, and Banton has been missing ever since. Back at the train station, Mulder notices that the station's soft light doesn't cast a shadow. Mulder and Scully notice Banton and chase him onto the train platform. Just before his shadow can kill Scully, Mulder shoots out all the lights. **Act 3:** Mulder and Scully visit Banton in a psychiatric hospital. He explains that his shadow reduces matter to energy and therefore kills people. He is afraid the government is after him to learn his secrets. Det. Ryan stops the interrogation. Her supervisor, Det. Barron, says they will transfer Banton to jail, but Mulder protests. Mulder meets with Mr. X and asks him to help with Banton. Mr. X refuses. That night, Mr. X and two orderlies come to the psychiatric hospital to take Banton. Banton's shadow kills the two orderlies. **Act 4:** Mulder thinks Banton has gone back to his lab at Polarity Magnetics. At the lab, Banton seeks help from Dr. Davy. Det.



Ryan appears and tries to arrest Banton. He uses his shadow to kill her. Dr. Davy double-crosses Banton and locks him in the target chamber. He makes a phone call and says he has Banton. Mr. X appears in the lab. Mulder and Scully arrive soon after as the particle accelerator is activated. They see a person in the chamber, but he disappears in a flash. Mulder meets with Mr. X and accuses him of killing Banton. At Det. Ryan's funeral Mulder tells Scully that Dr. Davy is missing. He suspects that maybe Davy was killed in the chamber, and that Banton was captured. Later, in a secret government facility, Mr. X checks on Banton, who is now the subject of some sort of experiment.

COMMENTS: The ludicrous concept behind "Soft Light" proves that writers shouldn't write science fiction unless they know what they're doing. The plot is riddled with so many holes it's as if Banton's shadow danced across the script!

Apparently Dr. Banton's shadow can swallow people, but it has no effect on other forms of matter. Since it absorbs everything, including clothes, it must be able to swallow inorganic matter. So why doesn't Banton's shadow carve huge chunks out of reality (à la Stephen King's "Langoliers")? (For that matter, why doesn't Banton's shadow swallow him?) The idea behind a killer shadow is intriguing, but the writers try too hard to tie the shadow to some kind of physics experiment gone awry. Then they throw physics entirely out the window and make "Soft Light" little better than some B-grade science fiction film. The result is laughable.

Nowhere in the story does Mulder prove that people have been killed, but all of a sudden everyone starts treating the missing persons case a serial killer case. On what evidence? Because Mulder said so? After only a few hours Scully is referring to the missing people as victims, and after the police disappear, Det. Ryan worries that she has a cop killer on the loose. Even though no bodies are ever found, everyone immediately assumes that they have been killed. Shouldn't the investigators pursue other leads as well? (Maybe the "victims" have been kidnapped.)

The appearance of Mr. X and his ambiguous motivations further muddle his role in *The X-Files* universe. It seems that Mr. X is morally ambiguous, that he is following his own agenda. So why does he help Mulder? Is he trying to get information (such as the existence of someone like Dr. Banton) from Mulder? If so, his actions still make no sense. Mr. X has proved that he knows far more than Mulder about secret government projects. He has helped leak information about these projects in the past. Why does he do it? The Deep Throat character was much better defined than Mr. X. Deep Throat was helping Mulder, but, at the same time, was caught up in the mechanisms of secret government plots. He walked a thin line between keeping his true association with Mulder a secret while maintaining his guise as an insider. When he finally exposed himself, he was killed. But what are the motivations of Mr. X? We don't know, and probably neither do the writers.

WRITER'S BLOCK: How did Banton's shadow move *under* the door of the hotel room? The door would have blocked the light, and the shadow should have fallen on the *outside* of the door. Mulder and Scully discover a scorch mark at the home of the second victim. But they never explain what Banton was doing at the home, or what connection he had with the victim. Banton was trying to stay away from people. So why was he in the home of this innocent person?

RATING: 

24. OUR TOWN

First televised May 12, 1995

Guest Starring Caroline Kava (Doris Kearns), John Milford (Walter Chaco), Gary Grubbs (Sheriff Arens), and Timothy Webber (Jess Harold), Co-Starring John MacLaren (George Kearns), Robin Mossley (Dr. Vance Randolph), and Gabrielle Miller (Paula), Featuring Hrothgar Mathews, Robert Maloney, and Carrie Cain Sparks; Written by Frank Spotnitz, Directed by Rob Bowman.

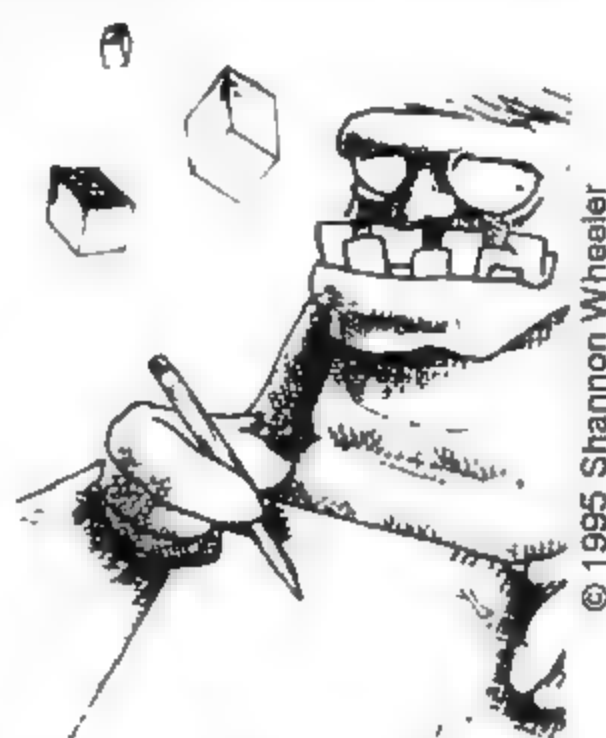
Intro: In Dudley, Arkansas, George Kearns follows girlfriend Paula into the woods. A person wearing a strange mask attacks him. **Act 1:** Mulder and Scully talk with Sheriff Arens and George's wife Doris about her husband's disappearance. Doris thinks her husband left her for someone else. Mulder learns that George was going to recommend to the Department of Agriculture that the local chicken plant, Chaco's Chicken, be shut down because

of health violations. At the plant, Paula starts to convulse, have hallucinations, and takes the manager hostage. Arens shoots Paula. **Act 2:** Mulder and Scully talk with Walter Chaco, Paula's grandfather and her legal guardian. Scully conducts the autopsy of Paula and discovers a rare degenerative disorder in Paula's brain that George also suffered. Paula was born on 1/6/48 but looks much younger. Scully is afraid that George's body was put into feed grinders at the plant and passed onto chickens—meaning everyone eating the product would be at risk. Mulder orders a local river dragged that is a runoff from the plant. Lots of human bones are found (but no skulls). **Act 3:** Mulder finds out that eighty-seven people disappeared near Dudley in the past fifty years. Mulder thinks the people have been eaten—cannibalism of human flesh is believed to prolong life. The Anasazi tribe in New Mexico were cannibals. Paula possibly contracted her disease from eating George. Doris visits Chaco; she feels guilty for helping to kill George; she's afraid she'll be caught and doesn't want to keep lying. Chaco says everything will be okay—Doris is a part of the group now. But later, Doris calls Mulder because she thinks Chaco will kill her. A masked man attacks Doris. **Act 4:** Scully arrives at Doris's house while Mulder goes to Chaco's. He sees a photo of Chaco with the Jale Tribe, New Guinea, 1944. Mulder breaks open a locked cabinet and discovers severed heads. Chaco, hiding at Doris's home, knocks out Scully. In the forest, the town residents hold a ceremony; everyone's eating. Chaco arrives with Scully; he's upset Doris, "one of us," was killed; outsiders are the problem; the town shouldn't turn on itself. But the chicken plant doctor, Randolph, has turned on Chaco. Chaco is put in a head lock and beheaded; Scully will be next. Mulder arrives in time to save her and shoots the masked man, who was Arens. Chaco, it turns out, was born in 1902.

COMMENTS: "Our Town" may be the most gruesome and shocking episode yet of *The X-Files*. The episode contains cannibalism, severed heads, offscreen decapitation, and Scully's near decapitation (which surely qualifies as a torture scene). In a continual effort to find new ways to scare and shock viewers, the makers of *The X-Files* go overboard with "Our Town," the latest in an increasing trend of uncomfortably brutal episodes.

While the producers of *The X-Files* constantly (and rightfully) strive for a gritty realism, they must also recognize that good storytelling need not always rely on explicitly visceral scenes. The near deaths of Mulder and Scully in "Die Hand Die Verletzt" and the excruciating exorcism scene in "The Calusari" (complete with bleeding walls) push the envelope of tasteful television drama. But "Our Town" goes too far. Although we don't actually see the decapitation of Chaco, it's brutally obvious that's what happened—and although we know Mulder will save Scully before her head is lopped off, Scully doesn't know that. "Our Town" deliberately shows us her fear in the face of a certain, violent death. Such scenes are cruel and unnecessary. The drama is well-served without them.

Sometimes the best kind of scare is the kind that exists only in the imagination of the viewer. *The X-Files* has successfully accomplished this



type of storytelling in the past. In fact, no other show compares to the skillful manner in which *The X-Files* can establish a dark and eerie mood filled with the tension of potential danger. Apparently the writers don't think that tension and potential danger is enough. Now we get scenes of blatant violence and explicit horror when it's not needed. We're certainly not arguing for the censorship of controversial (or horrific) subject matter, merely a self-restraint on the part of the show's creators on how they present such subject matter.

Despite its morbid presentation, "Our Town" is a skillfully written episode. The truth about the cannibalism is not revealed until later in the show, but a number of early, subtle clues might alert the attentive viewer: The man on Mulder's videotape warns that the Fire Demons want their pound of flesh, Mulder finds a fork near the bonfire, the foreman at the chicken processing plant explains that "chickens can feed on chickens," and finally there is the slogan for Chaco Chickens—"Good People, Good Food." These small touches show an effort on the part of the show's writers to allow the viewer to participate in solving the mystery.

"Our Town" contains another startling (though probably coincidental) comment. When Mulder examines the bones they have discovered, he makes a reference to the Anasazi Tribe of Indians, explaining that the Anasazi may have been cannibals. Curiously, the next episode of *The X-Files* is called "Anasazi," and deals, in part, with this lost tribe of Indians. The reference is interesting, although as far as we can tell there are no sub-plots crossing over between the two episodes.

WRITER'S BLOCK: When Mulder first went to Chaco's home, why didn't he notice the human skull in the front hallway? Mulder asks Sheriff Arens to drag the river. The Sheriff hesitates, and then reluctantly agrees. Later he shows Mulder the huge pile of bones they recovered. But Arens was in on the whole cannibalism ritual—in fact, he was the executioner! Why did he provide Mulder with such an important clue to the mystery? Surely, as Sheriff, he could have misled Mulder about what was found, or at least

dragged a part of the river where there were no bones!

RATING: ○○○○

25. ANASAZI

First televised May 19, 1995

Guest Starring Peter Donat (Bill Mulder), Floyd "Red Crow" Westerman (Albert), Nicholas Lea (Agent Krycek), William B. Davis (Smoking Man), and Mitch Pileggi (Walter Skinner). Co-Starring Michael David Simms (Senior FBI Agent), Renae Mornseau (Josephine Doane), Ken Camroux (2nd Senior Agent), Dakota House (Eric), Bernie Coulson (The Thinker), Featuring Bruce Harwood (Byers), Dean Haglund (Langly), Tom Braidwood (Frohike), Mitchell Davies, Paul

Secrets of the X-Files

This one-hour special immediately preceded "Anasazi." It contained clips from the first two seasons—a survey of various cases Mulder and Scully have investigated, plus a look at the two lead characters and many of the supporting cast such as Skinner, Mr. X, and The Lone Gunmen.

The special was probably helpful for newer viewers, although the title was certainly misleading. No "secrets" were presented—no behind-the-scenes footage, no interviews with the cast or production team, not even any out-takes. Viewers who had seen every episode got no new information here. *Secrets of the X-Files* had the look of a project quickly thrown together.

McLean, Teleplay by Chris Carter, Story by David Duchovny and Chris Carter, Directed by R.W. Goodwin.

Intro: A boy on a Navajo Reservation in New Mexico finds alien-looking bones buried in the desert. **Act 1:** A computer hacker, "The Thinker," breaks into defense documents. The Smoking Man will handle the situation. The Lone Gunmen trio visit Mulder's apartment, but he's not feeling well. "The Thinker" wants to meet him. Later, Mulder meets him and is given original Defense Department UFO intelligence files, 1940-present—Roswell, MJ12, etc. Mulder and Scully look at "the Holy Grail"—the top secret files—but it's in Navajo code. Skinner asks Mulder about receipt of sensitive files; Mulder punches him. **Act 2:** Scully meets with Skinner but is uncooperative. The Smoking Man visits Mulder's dad, Bill, whose name is on the files Mulder now has. Smoking Man suggests Bill deny everything to Mulder. Scully looks for someone to translate the file. Later, she's at Mulder's apartment, and someone shoots through the window. Mulder visits his dad, who used to work for the State Department. Agent Krycek hides in the house and shoots Bill before the father can tell Mulder much. Bill dies, telling Mulder, "Forgive me." **Act 3:** Scully fears Mulder will get accused of shooting Bill. Without his knowledge, she has the ballistics run on his gun. Mulder's suspicious of Scully. She learns Mulder's water supply is being drugged. Mulder returns home, sees suspicious figure, grabs him, and fights—it's Krycek. Scully arrives and sees that Mulder has Krycek's gun pointed at him. Scully sees Mulder begin to pull the trigger, so she shoots Mulder in the shoulder. **Act 4:** Mulder

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Surviving it

Will be impossible

THE X-FILES

wakes up thirty-six hours later in New Mexico—they've driven for two days. A Navajo, Albert, is working on Mulder's file. Scully's name is in the files—something to do with a test. Albert tells Mulder that six hundred years ago, the Anasazi ("ancient aliens") Indian Tribe used to live in the area. They disappeared without a trace; Albert thinks they were abducted by "visitors who still come." The Indian boy takes Mulder to the desert. Mulder gets a phone call from Smoking Man, who says that Bill authorized the project and couldn't live with himself; if Mulder goes public, he exposes his dad, too. Smoking Man denies any involvement in Bill's death. The call allows the military to locate Mulder. Mulder climbs into a train car buried in the sand and calls Scully—alien bodies are stacked. Scully says files talk about Axis scientists given US amnesty after WWII—government performed experiments on humans. Mulder says the bodies aren't human—but he notices a smallpox vaccination scar on one of the arms. Then the top door closes; a helicopter arrives with soldiers and the Smoking Man. Mulder appears to have disappeared from the train car—so Smoking Man orders it to be burned. "To be continued"

COMMENTS: It's hard to comment on "Anasazi" since the episode is really the first part of a two-part story. Most of the plotlines in the episode are left unresolved, presumably to be addressed in the third-season opener. Still there is a nagging fear that some, if not all, of the questions raised in "Anasazi" will never be satisfactorily resolved.

Many episodes of *The X-Files* have been notorious for sucker-punching the viewer with unfinished stories and dangling subplots. (The worst this season has to be Mulder's apparent encounter with an alien in "Little Green Men.") The cliffhanger ending of "Anasazi," however, demands specific and detailed resolution. Mulder was trapped in an enclosed space when a fire-bomb exploded. The viewer expects to discover how he survived. But what if the third season opens, say, with Mulder wandering alone in the desert? He has survived the blast but we don't know how. Could the makers of *The X-Files* be brazen enough to pull such a stunt? They've done it before. (How did Scully return after her abduction? What transpired between the alien and Mulder?) Let's hope they don't risk trying it again; Mulder's fate must be shown.

"Anasazi" raises other troubling questions. Krycek killed Mulder's father, but Smoking Man denies involvement. Smoking Man also says he won't kill Mulder for fear of making him a martyr. (So who was responsible for shooting into Mulder's apartment?) As things stand now, there are potentially three or four different covert factions operating within the government, each with their own agenda, and each with a different regard

for Mulder's life. The series must make some effort in the future to clarify these various forces.


More and more, the writers seem to want to have it both ways with characters Skinner, Mr. X, and, in this episode, Smoking Man. The characters are alternately for and against Mulder, not, it seems, depending on anything beyond story requirements. Some inconsistency is okay—that's life—but here, the characters don't exist as more than cardboard props, swayed about by whatever the writer deems necessary to create an "adventure" for Mulder and Scully.

The episode contains a number of other questionable incidents, which, in retrospect, make little sense. Scully shoots Mulder because she's afraid that if he killed Krycek with Krycek's weapon, there would be no way to prove he didn't kill his father with same gun. This is a ridiculous excuse; Mulder was already holding the gun, his fingerprints were all over it—he had already done the damage. Scully shot Mulder for a different reason—she was preventing him from killing another man. But instead of addressing this crucial element of the plot, the writers concoct a flimsy excuse for Scully's actions and refuse to acknowledge what almost happened. They forego a subplot rich with story and character potential. What if Mulder came to realize just how close he came to murder? The resulting self introspection might help him learn more about himself and his relationship with Scully.

Elements of "Anasazi" also call into question the entire premise of *The X-Files*. An FBI official explains to Scully that she was originally assigned to the X-Files to debunk Mulder's theories. (Actually, Scully was assigned to report on Mulder, not "debunk" the legitimacy of the X-Files. This may be a fine line; Blevins no doubt assumed the one would lead to the other. Still, it's a distinction Scully should have reminded them of.) But if the X-Files division could be shut down (as it has been), thereby preventing Mulder from pursuing his theories, why does the FBI need Scully performing such a meaningless task? The series has yet to provide a worthwhile answer.

At one point in the episode, Mulder's father speaks some crucial lines that apply not only to the plot of "Anasazi" (and the next season) but also to the series as a whole. He tells Mulder, "You are going to hear the words, and they are going to come to make sense to you." Is this line prophetic, or just an offhanded remark by the show's creative team? Will the words of *The X-Files* come to make sense, or will the viewers forever be trying to fit together the mismatched pieces of *The X-Files* puzzle?

NOTE: The Thinker was alluded to in "One Breath."

RATING: 

X

The Sum of the Partners

Fans of *The X-Files* are never at a loss to justify their enthusiasm. The complex, open ended plots, which require the audience's active attention; the carefully-controlled use of lighting and color; the dense subtext; these are unique, we say. These make superior television. But they would not suffice to make popular television. *The X-Files* is on the verge of becoming a mainstream success, which, by and large, stands or falls on the appeal of the characters—in this case, two complicated and unusual people.

The most notable feature of characterization here is that it is impossible to discuss just Scully, or just Mulder. The team functions as a unit, even when physically separated. The second season premiere illustrates this when Mulder runs off on his own, confident that Scully will follow the subtle clues he left her. She justifies his faith; but the password with which she does it is: "TRUSTNO1." Obviously, "no one" is an exclusive set. We see over and over again that

by Peni R. Griffin

Scully and Mulder trust each other absolutely,¹ standing alone together in a hostile world.

Yet they do not have identical interests. Mulder is an agent of convenience, following procedure only when it advances his own agenda. Scully has an agenda, too, and declares it early. In "Squeeze," when Colton asks whose side she is on, she responds: "The victim's." She wants to solve the problem, help the victim, bring the case to trial. For that, she needs evidence, not belief!

Methodologically, Scully is the "better" agent, focusing on the details that can make or break a case. Mulder can follow paper trails and research minutiae when he wants to, but his talent is for seeing the "big picture." His years of reading and experience enable him to find things Scully doesn't know to look for. Yet his intuition is narrow, applying to crime scenes and paranormal

¹That is, when they can confidently identify each other—an interesting theme beyond the scope of this essay.

events, not to everyday nuances. Scully, eyes open for the mundane, is the one who picks up on things like B.J.'s affair with Tillman in "Aubrey." She yanks Mulder's chain about "sensing" it, but the clues are there if he had cared to pay attention.

Scully's favorite tool is the autopsy. Unlike the living witnesses Mulder prefers to deal with, corpses don't fantasize or lie; they have no hidden agendas, no memory flaws, no distorting preconceptions. They must also be dealt with in a prescribed manner, or the information gained will be worthless. Scully has been criticized as too inflexible; but her meticulous use of the scientific method and her scrupulous record keeping have proved themselves time and again. When her methods lead to the same conclusions as Mulder's—when, for example, her autopsy of an elephant confirms his bizarre suspicion that it was pregnant—they know they have a little piece of truth. (What they do with it is another matter!)

Science may sometimes seem an inadequate tool; but it's better than no tool at all. The skeptical theories Scully suggests can be weird in themselves, and seldom pan out: cryptomnesia, whirlwinds transporting toads,

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lighting effects rendering elephants invisible to videotape. Yet scientific procedures save lives ("Dod Kalm," "Endgame") and uncover the truth ("The Erlenmeyer Flask," "The Red Museum," "Ice," etc.). The essence of the scientific method is to observe and to experiment in order to learn. For Scully to abandon this proven approach just because she's seen a few weird things would be counterproductive.

In this light, Scully's reaction—or lack thereof—to Purity Control deserves mention. Though she actually handled the fetus from which the culture came, in "The Red Museum" she states that its alien origin has not been conclusively established. When in "Little Green Men" Mulder worries that the whole alien abduction conspiracy may be a delusion, Scully does not cite this fetus in his support. He never mentions it himself. Has she not told him about it? If not, *why* not?

We know from "Dod Kalm" that Scully doesn't tell Mulder everything. Presumably her "visions" in the hospital were too private, and she only mentions them from compassion to relieve his fear of dying. But there's nothing private about the fetus. Is she denying its implications, even to herself—betraying her scientific principles? Or is her compassion unable to face telling him that she had held The Definitive Proof in her two hands and had given it up just to save him?

As of this writing, we cannot tell. As with so many questions raised by this show, the answer is indefinitely postponed. What is plain, however, is that neither Scully, the steady nuts-and-bolts operator, nor Mulder, the flashy whiz kid, does as well alone as in the team. Scully hasn't the database or the trust in her own intuition to chart the course they must follow. Mulder hasn't the patience or flexibility to lay every stone in the roadway so that other people can walk on it. These two need each other. The partnership is greater than the sum of the partners.

This is increasingly true personally as well as professionally. Throughout the first season, Mulder is ambivalent toward Scully, courting her intellect while holding her friendship at arms' length. This behavior is explicable in light of Mulder's personal history. Ever since his sister vanished and his parents divorced, every relationship we know of has ended in betrayal, death, or both. Retreating from a promising career into the intellectual basement of the Bureau's weird cases seems to have been his (wildly unsuccessful!) attempt to escape his evil karma, or at least to insulate others from it.

So when Scully shows up, Mulder pushes her away. She comes back, making him feel easy and comfortable in spite of his best intentions. He becomes so desperate to maintain his emotional isolation that he lies to her outright—telling her that even his parents call him Mulder—when she tries to use his first name.

The official termination of the partnership is his big chance to separate her from the jinx of his friendship. He institutes paranoid levels of precautions, essentially shoving her out the door and locking it behind her—but he couldn't bring himself to take her key away, and she comes back. In the garage of the Watergate Hotel, Mulder faces the awful truth—that he can rely on her, whether he wants to or not.

It is significant that, though they hurt each other violently during "Anasazi," no apologies are demanded and no grudges held. Once the hallucinogen is safely out of Mulder's system, his "You shot me" is bewildered rather than angry, and he accepts Scully's explanations at face value. On her part, Scully neither reproaches his drug-induced failure of faith, nor dwells on the risk and trouble she has taken for his sake. The bond between them is stronger, apparently, than anything they can do to each other.

The origin of this bond, on Mulder's side, is not hard to guess. Scully—young, short, argumentative—inevitably fills the empty sister slot in his life. He's the senior partner and therefore responsible for her, but he cannot protect her. The parallel becomes hideously perfect when *They* abduct her despite his best efforts to save her.²

Interestingly, when the alien assassin (in "Colony/Endgame") offers to trade Scully for the supposed long lost Samantha, Mulder does not balk. Does this mean that Scully has become more important than his sister, or that they balance out exactly? In a reversed situation, would he have protested Scully's trading herself for "Samantha?"

It is not clear whether Scully has thought of this aspect of their relationship. If so, she makes no attempt to live up to it. Instead, she acts as Mulder's babysitter. In addition to saving him from his own recklessness on numerous occasions, she curbs his boyish enthusiasm, tells him when he's overtired, and makes him do his homework. She even picks up after him, when she retrieves the gun he drops in "Fearful Symmetry"! Not being his mother, she does not have the moral authority to (so to speak) take the Nintendo away and make him clean his room, but she's trying. Besides, he's hooked her on Nintendo, too.

In the beginning, Scully's secure and happy life gives her reservoirs of emotional stability with which to support the babysitter role. Now that she has had her naïveté kicked out of her, been abducted five times, attacked twice in her own home, attended her father's funeral, and been on life support three times, she is trapped in her own strength. Babysitters can't be afraid of the dark. Whereas, in the first season, she would readily admit to being afraid, or embarrassed, in the second season she denies her weaknesses to Mulder, a tendency that seems likely ("Irresistible," "Fresh Bones," "F. Emasculata") to become a dangerous weakness in itself. Where is she to draw the line between protecting Mulder and deceiving him?

This new flaw is a natural growth in her characterization. In her first interview, Scully said that she saw the FBI as "a place where she could prove herself." Prove herself to whom? This is answered at her father's funeral, where her burning question is: *Was he proud of me?* This particular matter would seem to be settled. By now, though, the habit is ingrained. How often has she had to

²This subtext is a valuable brake on the show's romantic possibilities. Mulder *can't* go to bed with Scully, because it would feel incestuous. Judging from the glimpses we've had of his sex life, he needs to resolve the sister problem before moving on to more complex relationships, anyway.

demonstrate—to the Great God Dad; to brothers, classmates, boyfriends, instructors, bosses, suspects—that she doesn't need their protection, concessions, and condescension?

The show does not have to raise this matter overtly. Scully is a walking gender issue, a mass of "feminine" (compassionate, patient, tactful) and "masculine" (rational, active, brave) traits. Her combination of softness and confidence (uprightness) attracts sadists like Pfister. Both the corrupt and the innocent members of the federal bureaucracy underestimate her. And though Scully is very good at looking after herself, there's no getting around the fact that in many cases she is more vulnerable than the men around her.

Mulder has always assumed Scully's competence, treating her much as he would a male colleague.³ Scully reciprocates by not carrying a chip on her shoulder. We cannot tell whether he appreciates how few women would be so tolerant of girly calendars and centerfolds in the office. Mulder is not perfect in this regard, though, as is shown in "Excelsis Dei," the episode that comes closest to dealing explicitly with gender politics.

Why is Mulder so eager to run away from this "entity rape" case? Despite the dead-end nature of similar cases in his mental databank, a crime exists, and he ought to realize that only he and Scully can solve it. Something—some shame or cowardice—blinds him. Fear of old age, disease, and death? Inability to sort out his reactions to the rape?

Probably Scully's recent abduction (what did they do to her that she doesn't remember and was powerless to resist?) and her doctor's-eye view of the injuries add to her determination to help; but any woman confronted with a rape victim must either run away in denial or identify with the victim. Scully has the nearly impossible task of accepting the identification, while not letting it affect her investigative judgment.

Women all over America no doubt felt betrayed; but it is precisely this sort of friction that drives the series. Scully and Mulder stand united against the darkness (and the blinding, alien light) of ignorance and evil; but their unity is riddled with conflicts. Scully cannot be both the little sister and the babysitter. Mulder cannot both seek truth and avoid liars. Neither can battle darkness except at risk of corruption. (Mulder came within a hair of committing murder three times while Scully was gone. Scully actively impedes a legitimate murder investigation in order to protect Mulder in "Anasazi.") How are they to balance their intense working intimacy with the rest of their lives?

That's the test; the only thing that matters; the only thing that keeps a show on the air. It's a test *The X-Files* consistently passes with flying colors.

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³It's hard, though, to imagine Mulder wiping barbecue sauce off a male partner's mouth ("Red Museum") or Scully patting a female partner on the head ("Little Green Men")!

David Duchovny's Bizarre Twin Peaks Case!

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Years before David Duchovny became a major star as Fox Mulder on *The X-Files*, he was known to fans of the television show *Twin Peaks* as Agent Bryson of the Drug Enforcement Agency. *Twin Peaks*, of course, is the story of FBI Special Agent Dale Cooper's (Kyle MacLachlan) investigation into the murder of Laura Palmer (Sheryl Lee) and the effects the death has upon the small town of Twin Peaks, Washington. Shortly after Cooper solves the murder, he finds himself framed for drug theft by the notorious Jean Renault (Michael Parks). This French-Canadian drug dealer blames Cooper for the recent deaths of brothers Bernard and Jacques Renault, and he seeks revenge.

Agent Bryson is assigned to determine whether the charges brought against Cooper are valid and therefore prosecutable. Cooper is relieved that Dennis Bryson will be investigating the case—he had worked with the agent years before on an undercover sting operation. (This is recounted in the book *The Autobiography of F.B.I. Special Agent Dale Cooper: My Life, My Tapes* by Scott Frost.) Cooper looks forward to seeing his one-time partner again but is stunned when Bryson arrives in Twin Peaks dressed as a woman! Apparently *Dennis Bryson* had discovered he enjoyed dressing in women's clothes and became *Denise Bryson*. Though initially shocked by the change in Bryson, Cooper's genial, non-judgmental nature allows him quickly to accept his co-worker's new lifestyle.

For three days (series time—each episode represents one "day" in the life of the characters), Agent Denise Bryson visits Twin Peaks, investigates Cooper, and clears his good name. Along the way he delivers some classic comic lines, temporarily confuses a few of the residents, and is instrumental in resolving a tense standoff between Cooper and Renault. The character is memorable and funny, and it's hard now to imagine anyone but Duchovny playing him (her). And although *Twin Peaks* has greater moments, the Denise Bryson episodes are still fun excerpts from one of television's greatest series.

David Duchovny delivers an understated, but genuinely comic performance as Denise Bryson—an outlandish character in a serious plotline. This minor (though crucial) character appears in only three episodes of *Twin Peaks*, but he makes a lasting impression as the cross-dressing agent. Fans of Duchovny should enjoy his early work in the acclaimed series and will discover that his flair for subtle comedy was apparent long before he became Fox Mulder.

It's tempting to over-analyze the character of Denise Bryson in *Twin Peaks*. The series already overflows with symbolism and themes of duality and good and evil. In *Twin Peaks*, nothing is ever quite as it seems; the presence of a cross-dressing DEA agent, therefore, seems oddly appropriate. But the character of Denise Bryson primarily provides comic relief at a time in the show's history when minor subplots are given greater attention due to an absence of a unifying main storyline (see *Wrapped in Plastic* 17 for producer Harley Peyton's explanation as to why *Twin Peaks* briefly lost its way).

The following is a short guide to the three *Twin Peaks* episodes in which David Duchovny appears. These episodes are available on videotape and laserdisc; they are also rerun fairly often on the Bravo cable channel. Frustratingly, however, the numbering system is inconsistent. Below are the official episode numbers. On videotape, look for episodes 18-20; on laserdisc, look for episodes 2018-2020 (on laserdisc Volume 3).

X-Files fans may also be interested in knowing that Michael Horse (Sheriff Tskany in "Shapes" from *XF*'s first season) is a regular co-star on *Twin Peaks* as Deputy Hawk and appears in the following episodes. In addition, Don Davis (Scully's father) appears in the second and third episodes below as Air Force Major Briggs. His role in the third is especially good and of additional interest to *XF* fans—he has just returned from a mysterious disappearance in the woods, reveals some strange tattoos on his neck obtained during the journey, and explains Project Blue Book's tie to *Twin Peaks*. (See "Blue Books and Black Lodges: *Twin Peaks* and the UFO Phenomenon" in *Wrapped in Plastic* 12.)



Don Davis

Episode #2011 (originally aired 12/15/90)
[*Twin Peaks* date: Thursday, March 16, 1989]
Written by Barry Pullman; Directed by Duwayne Dunham

FBI Regional Bureau Chief Gordon Cole (David Lynch) tells Cooper that Agent Dennis Bryson will be coming to investigate Cooper. Denise Bryson arrives (dressed as a woman). Cooper makes the introductions to Sheriff Truman (Michael Ontkean) and Deputy Hawk, both of whom are speechless. Bryson looks forward to a long talk with Cooper. As he leaves,

Hawk remarks on Bryson's clothes, "That's a good color for him." Later Cooper meets Denise at Mayor Dougie Milford's (Tony Jay) wedding reception. Denise catches the bouquet: "I had an unfair advantage. How many of those girls were varsity wide receivers?" He and Cooper discuss the drug case. Later, Denise dances with Deputy Andy Brennan (Harry Goaz).

Episode #2012 (1/12/91)

[*Twin Peaks* date: Friday, March 17, 1989]
Written by Harley Peyton and Robert Engels;
Directed by Caleb Deschanel

Denise comes to Cooper's room to discuss the case. Audrey Horne (Sherilyn Fenn) is already there and is intrigued by Denise. Audrey



Agent "Dennis" Bryson and Special Agent Dale Cooper (Kyle MacLachlan) from Episode #2013

kisses Cooper and leaves. Denise reviews new evidence regarding Cooper's frame-up. As he leaves he asks about Audrey. Cooper is surprised—Denise is still interested in girls? Denise replies: "Hey, I may be wearing a dress but I still put my panties on one leg at a time, if you know what I mean." Cooper: "Not really." Denise approaches Ernie Niles (James Booth) and convinces the reluctant ex-con to help them catch Jean Renault. Later, Denise and Cooper question Ernie about his involvement with Renault. They plan an undercover drug buy—and Denise will be the buyer.

Episode #2013 (1/19/91)

[*Twin Peaks* date: Saturday, March 18, 1989]
Written by Harley Peyton; Directed by Todd Holland

Denise sets up the plan with Ernie. Later, Denise dresses as a man in order to play the part of the drug buyer: "You can call me Dennis! Whaddaya think?" Sheriff Truman whistles. At the drug buy, Ernie blows the undercover operation; he and Denise are taken hostage. Cooper trades himself for the hostages. Hours later, the standoff between Renault and the police continues. Suddenly Denise appears, dressed as a waitress. Denise is carrying a tray of food, and Renault lets him in. Denise shows Cooper a gun hidden in his garter belt. Cooper grabs it and shoots Renault, while Denise wrestles with Renault's partner, Preston King. Denise punches King and knocks him out. Denise saves the day!

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X-Files Magazine Checklist

How things change Last year, our *XF* magazine article checklist neatly fit onto a single page (albeit in very small type). The following list contains all of the nationally-distributed (i.e. no local newspaper) articles and features related to *The X-Files* to date that we've seen. Pages refer to full pages unless noted or obvious from context (i.e. "XF mention"). Total page count includes photos that accompany text. Publications are from the United States unless otherwise noted. *XF* articles are coming fast and furiously these days; between the time this goes to the printer and hits the stores, no doubt dozens more will have appeared. But here's the list so far.

AMERICAN CINEMATOGRAPHER

June 1995

- XF cover mention
- Darkness Descends on The X-Files* by Chris Probst
- XF article (pages 28-30, 32)

AXCESS

Volume 2 #5

- XF cover mention
- X-Files Creator Chris Carter: Into The Unknown* by Dan Whitworth
- Carter interview (pages 120-123)
- Not Paranoid. An Interview with David Duchovny*
- Duchovny interview (page 124)
- The Other Generation "X"* by Ira Shull
- XF on-line article (page 125)

CABLE TIMES (British)

April 1995

- XF cover mention
- Dossier on The X-Files* by Alex J. Geairni
- XF article (page 10)

CINEFANTASTIQUE

Volume 26 #2 February 1995

- X-Files* by Dale Kurtera
- XF article/Carter interview (pages 52-53)

Volume 26 #5 August 1995

- XF cover mention
- X-Files* by Paula Vitaris
- XF article (pages 48-49)

CINESCAPE

#2 November 1994

- XF cover
- X-Files: The truth is here* by Edward Gross
- XF articles (11.5 pages)(pages 34-45)

#4 January 1995

- X-Files team blasts into Space*
- Morgan/Wong article (.4 page 13)

#5 February 1995

- On a Right Wing and a Prayer*
- XF mention and photo (page 14)

#7 April 1995

- Duchovny cover inset photo
- Big Time* by Douglas Perry
- Duchovny article/interview (pages 40-41)

#8 May 1995

- Anderson cover inset photo
- Fright Stalkers* by Edward Gross
- XF/Kolchak article (pages 54-59)

COMICS BUYER'S GUIDE

#1059 March 4, 1994

- Comics Guide* by Don Thompson
- XF review (.33 page, pages 124 & 131)

#1106 January 27, 1995

- XF cover
- XF comic book articles/interviews (pages 26, 28, 29)

COMMONWEAL

September 9, 1994

- Go Ahead, Take a Peek* by Frank McConnell
- XF/Fox network article

DARK STAR (England)

#11 (Two printings)

Part XF cover

The X-Files by Rob Dyer

XF episode guide (pages 6-10)

DETAILS

February 1995

- XF cover mention
- Creep Show* by Stephen Saban
- XF article (pages 69-72)

DISNEY ADVENTURES

Vol. 5 #7 May 1995

- Ticket: TV* by Debbie Beyer
- Anderson interview (page 22)
- Aliens in Hollywood: The X-Files* by Debbie Beyer
- XF article (.3 page 38)

DREAMWATCH (England)

#9 May 1995

- XF cover
- X-Cess*
- XF news update (.15 page 5)
- The David Duchovny File*
- Duchovny article (page 7)
- Get Carter!*
- Carter article (.65 page 8)
- Into the Second Season*
- Episode Guide (3.35 pages)(pages 8-11)

ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

#203/4 December 31, 1993/January 7, 1994

- The Best & Worst Television, 1993: Honor Roll, 'Best Cult Show'*
- XF mention (page 108)

#205 January 14, 1994

- Space Race* by Benjamin Svetkey
- XF mention and photo (page 17)
- The Week [in] Television* by Bruce Fretts
- XF review (1 paragraph, page 44)

#206 January 21, 1994

- "X" Marks What's Hot* by Ken Tucker
- XF article (1.33 pages)(pages 40-41)

#240 September 16, 1994

- XF mentions (pages 66-67)
- Prime-Time Dress Reversal* by Enca Kornberg
- Part Scully article (1 paragraph, page 97)
- XF second-season premiere review (.33 page 100)

#251 December 2, 1994

- Duchovny cover inset photo
- A Genuine X-centric* by Bruce Fretts
- Duchovny article (.4 page 32)

#252 December 9, 1994

- Fences X'd Out* by Richard Natale
- XF/Picket Fences article (.35 page 12)



#255/256 December 30, 1994

- XF/Twin Peaks letter to editor (page 6)
- Hits & the Pits*
- Duchovny quote (page 8)

The Best & Worst: Television by Ken Tucker

XF article (.5 page 111)

#263/264 February 24/March 3, 1995

- Getting a Little Wired* by William Mercer McLeod
- Duchovny photo and caption (1.25 pages)
- (pages 40-41)

#265 March 10, 1995

- XF cover
- The X-Files Exposed* by Dana Kennedy
- XF article (pages 18-24)

#268 March 31, 1995

- Mail*
- XF letters to the editor and EW 265 cover reproduction

#272 April 28, 1995

- Television: The Week* by Bruce Fretts
- XF photo and review (.4 page 52)

#274 May 12, 1995

- Duchovny cover inset photo
- XF season finale mention (1 paragraph, page 28)

#277 June 2, 1995

- Anderson cover inset photo
- Anderson/Duchovny drawing by Drew Friedman (part page 21)
- XF mention (page 25)

EPI-LOG

#44 January/February 1995

- XF cover
- Episode guide by William E. Anchors, Jr. (21.5 pages) (pages 16-23, 111-124)

FANGORIA

#136 September 1994

- XF cover mention
- The X-Files Episode Guide* by Thomas Deja
- XF article (pages 62-69)

#142 May 1995

- Flukeman cover inset photo
- The FX Files* by Anne Moore
- XF make-up article (pages 30-34)

#143 June 1995

- XF cover mention
- Keepers of X Secrets* by Anne Moore
- Pileggi/Williams interview & article (4 pages) (pages 58-62)
- The Carter Administration* by Ed Martin
- XF ratings article (1 page)(pages 60-61)

FATE

November 1994

- Part XF cover
- Paranormal Programming Invades Primetime* by Loyd Auerbach
- Part XF article (pages 30-34)
- XF photo (page 36)

HERO ILLUSTRATED

#20 February 1995

- The X-Files* by Frank Kurtz
- Stephan Petrucha interview (pages 82-83)

#22 April 1995

- 20-page supplement
- Trick of the Light* by Stephan Petrucha and Charles Adlard
- Comic story (10 pages)
- Scully & Mulder's X-cellent Adventures* by Chris Ecker
- Petrucha interview

IMAGI-MOVIES

Volume 1 #3 Spring 1994

- 1993—The Year in Review: Television* by Mark Altman
- XF mention (1 paragraph page 60)

INSIDE SPORTS

July 1995

Can I Dunk? The Truth Is Out There by David Duchovny
 Essay about Duchovny's basketball playing (page 82)

LIGHTING DIMENSIONS

November 1994

The X-Files by John Calhoun
 XF lighting article (pages 70-73, 150, 152)

MAD

#335 May 1995

XF cover mention
Ecch-Files by Dick DeBartolo and Angelo Torres
 XF comic parody (pages 44-48)

MAD MOVIES CINE-FANTASTIQUE (France)

#90

Aux Frontières du Réel by Didier Allouch
 XF article and episode guide (pages 40-43)

MOVELINE

June 1995

Soundtracks & Scores by Steve Pond
 Duchovny photo and quote (part of page 24)
Agent of Fortune by Virginia Campbell
 Anderson interview (pages 64-65)

NEWSWEEK

December 5, 1994

The Truth Is X-ed Out There by Barbara Kantrowitz and Adam Rogers
 XF article (85 page 66)

NEW YORKER

April 18, 1994

"X" Factor by James Wolcott
 XF article (166 pages)(pages 98-99)

OMNI

December 1994

XF cover mention
Opening the X-Files: Behind the Scenes of TV's Hottest Show by David Bischoff
 XF article (466 pages)(pages 42-47, 88)

PARADE

October 30, 1994

Personality Parade by Walter Scott
 Q&A about Duchovny (1 paragraph, page 2) plus Mulder/Scully photograph

PEOPLE WEEKLY

April 25, 1994

Going to X-tremes by Michael A. Lipton and Karen Brailsford
 Duchovny article (pages 59-60)

December 26, 1994

Celeb Picks & Pans 1994
 Duchovny quote and photo (page 10)

March 13, 1995

Occult Leader by Tom Glatto and Craig Tomashoff
 Anderson article (pages 97-98)

June 19, 1995

His X-cellent Adventure by Michael A. Lipton and

Craig Tomashoff
 Carter article (2 pages)(pages 117-119)

PLAYGIRL

March 1995

Duchovny interview

PREMIERE

August 1994

Fear of Flying Saucers
 XF mention (page 92)

PRODUCER

December 1994

X-Ploring the Paranormal by Debra Kaufman
 XF article (pages 48-51)

REALMS OF FANTASY

#3 February 1995

XF cover mention
 Television column by Dan Persons
 XF article (2.15 pages)(pages 20, 22-24)

SAMHAIN (British)

#50 May/June 1995

Reviews: The X-Files by Nick Tanner
 XF review (3 page 38)

SCARLET STREET

#16 Fall 1994

XF cover mention
Stalking the X-Files by Drew Sullivan
 XF article (pages 67-68)
The Truth Is Out There by Jessie Lilley
 Chris Carter interview (25 pages)
 (pages 69, 70, 72)
True Believer by Drew Sullivan
 Duchovny interview (page 71)
Reasonable Doubts by Jessie Lilley
 Anderson interview (pages 73, 75, 76)
Squeeze Play by Jessie Lilley
 Doug Hutchison interview (23 pages)
 (pages 77-79)
Deep Inside The X-Files by Jessie Lilley
 Hardin interview (.7 page 79)

#18 Spring 1995

XF cover mention
Scarlet Letters letters column
 Photo and letter from Doug Hutchison
 (.33 page 4)
Inside The X-Files by Richard Valley
 XF news (page 16)

SCI-FI ENTERTAINMENT

December 1994

Trust No One by Lisa Maccarillo
 Chris Carter interview (pages 74-77)

SCI-FI UNIVERSE

#1 July 1994

Cool Sci-Fi: Cool Network
 XF article (.2 page 6)

#2 September 1994

XF cover inset photo
The X-Files Declassified by Edward Gross
 XF article (pages 58-61)

#6 April 1995

The Great Sci-Fi Debate by Kevin Stevens
 Part James Wong article, Duchovny/
 Amanda Pays XF photo (pages 8-9)
X-Rated by Melissa J. Perenson
 XF comic book article (page 86)

#7 June 1995

Ellison Unbound by Maggie Thompson
 Harlan Ellison discusses XF (.15 page 35)

SATELLITE ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

June 1995

Dear SEG: Looking for the X-Files
 Letter to editor and photo (page 3)

SATELLITE ORBIT

June 1995

Warp Speed by Ray Richmond
 XF mention (4 paragraphs, page 24) and
 small photo (page 23)

SHIVERS (England)

#13 December 1994

XF cover inset photo
Is the Truth Really Out There? by Simon Bacal
 XF article (pages 14-17)

#14 January 1995

XF cover mention

The X-Files: 20th Century Mutant by Michael
 Fillis

XF article (pages 37-39)

#16 April 1995

XF cover
Tales of the Fox by Edward Murphy
 Duchovny interview (pages 8-11)

SIGHT AND SOUND (England)

June 1995

XF cover mention
Talking with aliens by Jonathan Ross
 XF review (.75 page 61)

SKEPTICAL INQUIRER

Vol. 19 #2 March/April 1995

*Paranormal and Paranoia Intermingle on Fox
 TV's "X-Files"* by C. Eugene Emery, Jr
 XF article (pages 18-19)

SPECTRUM

#2 December 1994

Anderson cover inset photo
Friday's Female Cops!
 Part XF article (pages 32-37)

#3 April 1995

XF cover mention
An Interview with Stephan Petrucha (pages 27-29)

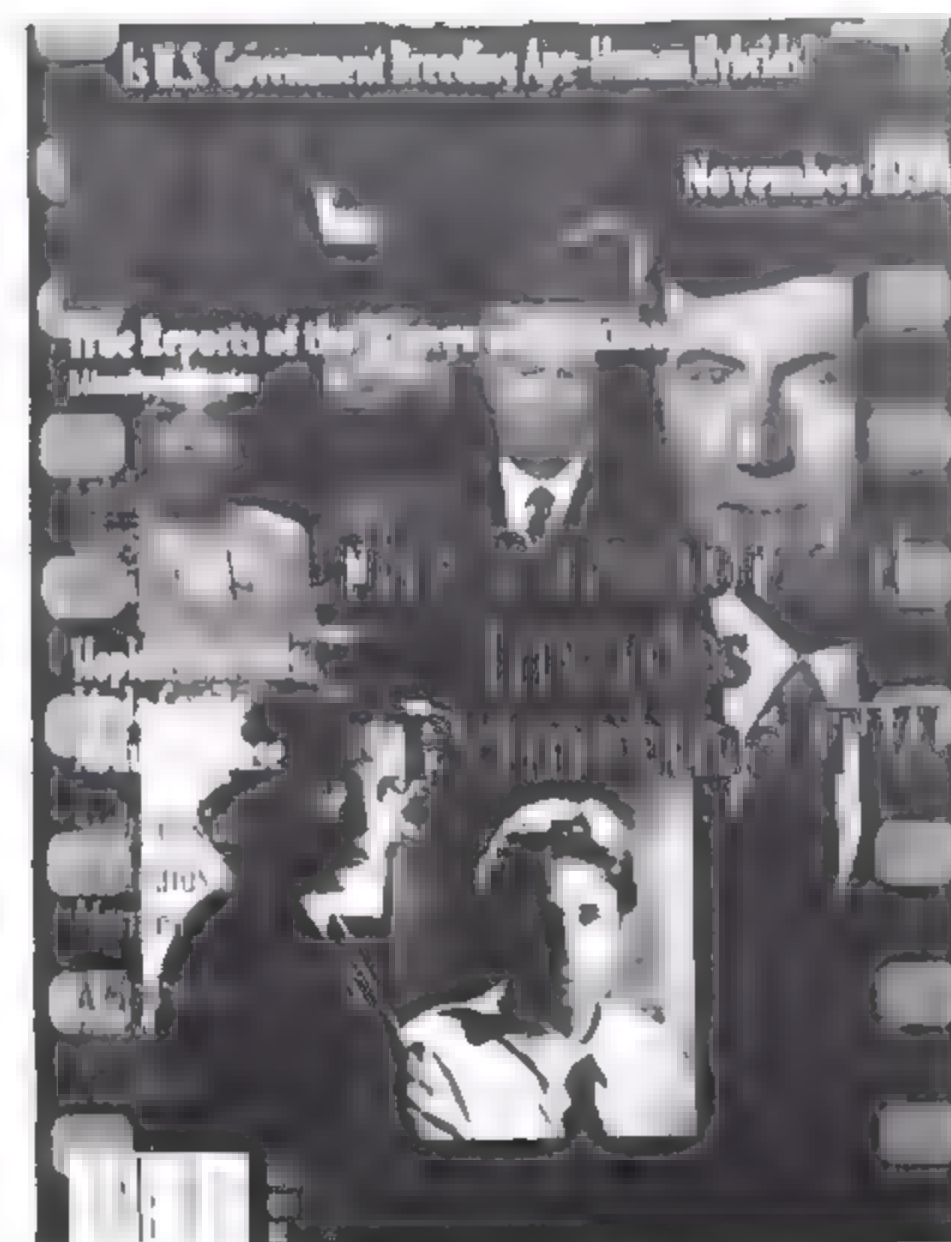
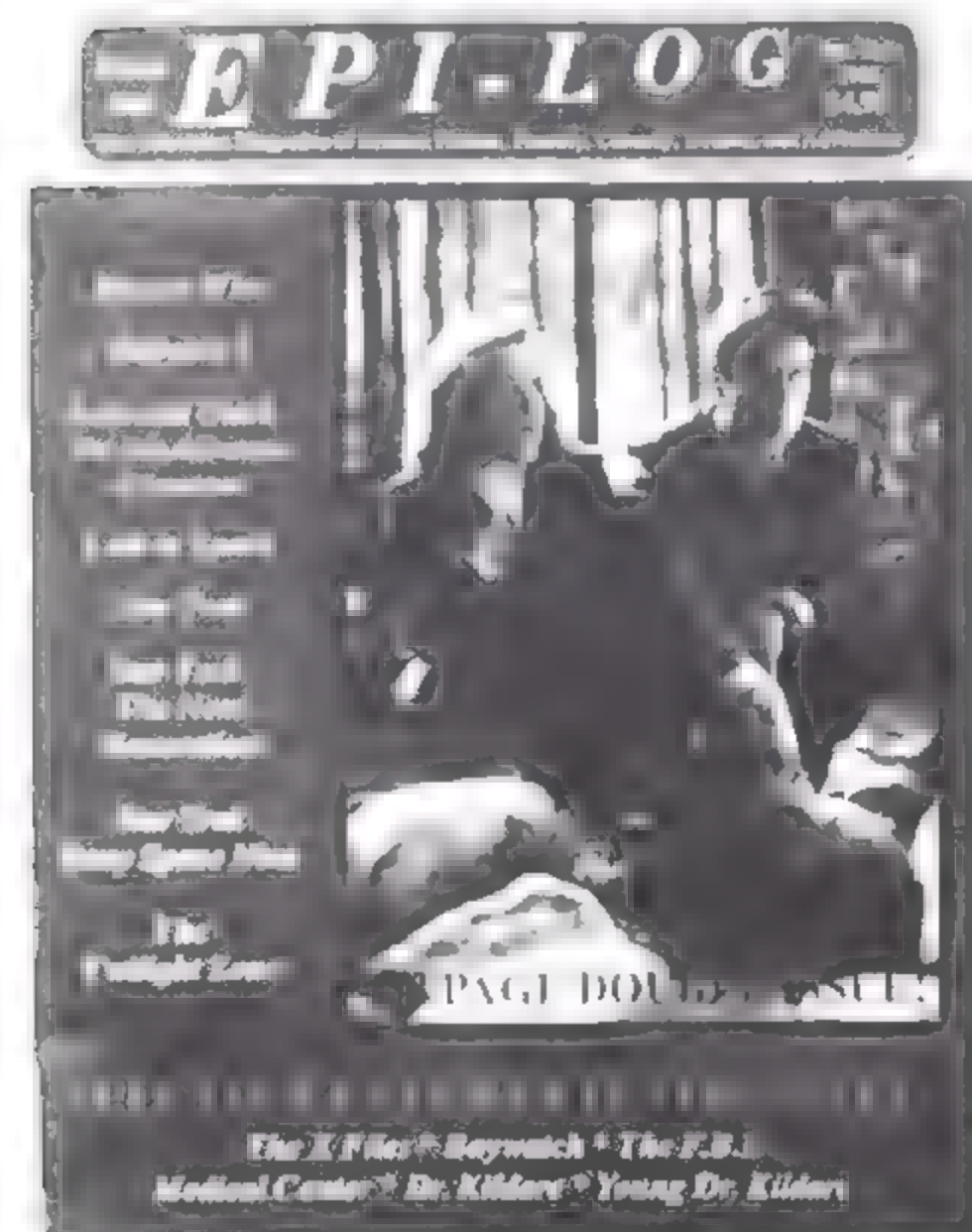
#4 July 1995

XF cover
 The issue you're holding—XF on pages 2-35

SPECTRUM SPECIAL EDITION (reprints from *Wrapped in Plastic*)

#1 June 1995

XF cover
The X-Files
 XF review from WIP 7 (page 2)
An Appointment with Dr. Scully
 Anderson interview from WIP 12 (pages 3-5)
Rush to Judgment? WIP Conspires to Re-examine The X-Files
 XF essay from WIP 12 (pages 6-9)
The X-Files Episode Guide
 Guide and commentary from WIP 12 (pages 9-26)
The Truth is Way Out There by Bryan Yamashiro
 XF/UFO essay from WIP 12 (225 pages) (pages 27-30)
David Duchovny and Sheryl Lee Co-Star in Showtime's Red Shoe Diaries
 Duchovny photo and RSD review from WIP 6 (page 30)
The X-Files Begins Second Season with "Little Green Men"
 XF review from WIP 13 (.85 page 31)
The X-Files Makes Cover to TV Guide (Sorta)
 XF article from WIP 12 (4 page)(pages 31-32)



SPIES

#4 July 1994

The X-Files by Charles Helfenstein
XF review (page 33)

SPIN

April 1995

Television column by Jonathan Bernstein
XF article (page 203)

STAR

February 14, 1995

X-Files Hunk in Real-Life Close Encounter With a UFO
Duchovny article (5 page 41)

STARLOG

#201 April 1994

XF cover mention
Scientific American by Kyle Counts
XF article (pages 76-79)

#202 May 1994

XF cover
Devil's Advocate by Marc Shapiro
Duchovny interview (pages 46-49)

#210 January 1995

XF cover mention
X-Writers by Paula Vitaris
Morgan/Wong article (pages 61-64)

#211 February 1995

Keeper of Secrets by Bill Florence
Hardin interview (3.66 pages)(pages 28-30, 74)

#212 March 1995

XF cover mention
The X-Comics by Bill Florence
XF comic book article (pages 58-60)

#213 April 1995

XF cover mention
X-Heroine by Julianne Lee
Anderson article (pages 32-35)

#215 June 1995

Duchovny inset cover photo
X-Symbol by Julianne Lee
Duchovny article (4 5 pages)(pages 27-30, 71)

STARLOG SCIENCE-FICTION EXPLORER

#7 June 1995

XF cover mention
Sounds of Silence by Julianne Lee
Mark Snow interview (pages 28-31)

STARLOG PLATINUM EDITION

Volume 2

True Disbeliever by Kyle Counts
Anderson article (pages 30-33)

Volume 3

Agent of Fears by Frank Garcia
David Nutter article (pages 58-61)

Volume 4 November 1994

The X-Files by Julianne Lee

XF article (pages 63-66)

Volume 5 January 1995

XF cover mention
The X-Novels by Julianne Lee
Charles Grant interview (pages 15-17)
Anderson poster

STAR WARS GALAXY

#2 Winter 1995

XF ashcan comic book supplement (b&w)(20 pages)

SUPERSTAR FACTS & PIX PRESENTS STARBASE

#32 1994

Online with The X-Files by Susan M. Rasco
XF computer forums article (1.3 pages)
(pages 10, 69)

TELEVISION TODAY

#1 Spring 1995

Anderson cover
Gillian Anderson: The X-Files' Unlikely TV Star
by David Walstad
Anderson article (pages 20-23)

TICK KARMA TORNADO

#8 December 1994

C-Span-Dex by Ben Edlund, Clay Griffith, and Dave Garcia
"The Tick Files" XF comic parody (pages 17-20)

TV & SATELLITE WEEK (England)

February 18, 1995

XF cover
X-Rated
XF article (.5 page 5)

TV GUIDE (Dallas/Fort Worth edition)

NOTE: XF ads (usually 1/2 page) are in the following editions: 9/4/93, 9/11/93, 10/30/93, 11/6/93, 11/13/93, 12/11/93, 1/1/94, 1/15/94, 1/29/94, 2/5/94, 2/12/94, 3/26/94, 4/2/94, 4/9/94, 4/16/94, 4/23/94, 4/30/94, 5/7/94, 9/10/94, 9/17/94, 10/29/94, 11/5/94, 11/12/94, 11/19/94, 11/26/94, 12/3/94, 1/7/95, 1/28/95, 2/4/95, 2/11/95, 2/18/95, 3/4/95, 3/11/95, 4/22/95, 4/29/95, 5/6/95, 5/13/95

July 24, 1993

On the Horizon by Mark Schwed
XF preview (.33 page 30)

September 18, 1993

Fall Preview '93
XF article (1page)(page 59)

January 15, 1994

Paranoid About the Paranormal by Divina Infusino
XF article (pages 20-21)

February 5, 1994

Got some X-plaining to do by Glenn Kenny
XF article (4 page 28)

February 26, 1994

The Couch Critic: The X-Files by Jeff Jarvis
XF review (1page)(page 8)

March 5, 1994

Ask TV Guide
XF question (page 2)

April 16, 1994

The Truth is Out There
XF article (5 page 30)

April 30, 1994

Ask TV Guide
Duchovny question (page 3)

June 11, 1994

The Best and Worst of the Year: The Best X We Ever Had
XF mention and photo (.25 page 12)
Hollywood Buzz: X-Baby?
Anderson article and photo (2 page 37)

June 18, 1994

XF mentions (pages 6, 8, and 16)

June 25, 1994

XF mention (page 42)

July 2, 1994

XF cover (some editions) or cover mention (other editions)
X-Files X-Clusive by Deborah Starr Seibel
XF article (pages 8-13)

September 10, 1994

XF photo on cover fold-out ad

October 22, 1994

XF mention (page 16)

October 29, 1994

Ask TV Guide
XF Q&A and photo (page 3)

November 5, 1994

6-page XF rerun ad (page 94)

November 12, 1994

The Truth Is Out There—and So Is the Baby
XF/Scully article (3 page 7)

December 3, 1994

XF letter to the editor (page 183)

February 11, 1995

XF mention (page 6)

March 4, 1995

ad for March 11 TV guide (25 page 58)

March 11, 1995

XF cover
Gillian & Dave's X-cellent Adventure by Deborah Starr Seibel
Anderson/Duchovny article (pages 8-12, 14)

May 6, 1995

Sci-Fi/Fantasy by Glenn Kenny
XF, Secrets of XF articles (page 36)

TV GUIDE (Canadian edition)

March 11, 1995

XF cover (different from U.S. edition)
Out There by Guy Saddy
XF article (pages 15-21)

TV ZONE (England)

#57 August 1994

XF mentions (pages 4 and 6)

#61 December 1994

XF cover
The X-Files Episode Guide by John Ainsworth (pages 14-18)
U.S. Updates
XF news (33 page 7)

#62 January 1995

XF cover mention
U S Update
XF news (2 page 7)
Chris Carter: Walking in Dark Woods by Mark Shapiro
Carter interview (pages 9-11)

#65 April 1995

XF cover inset photo
XF poster/episode listing (pages 24-25)

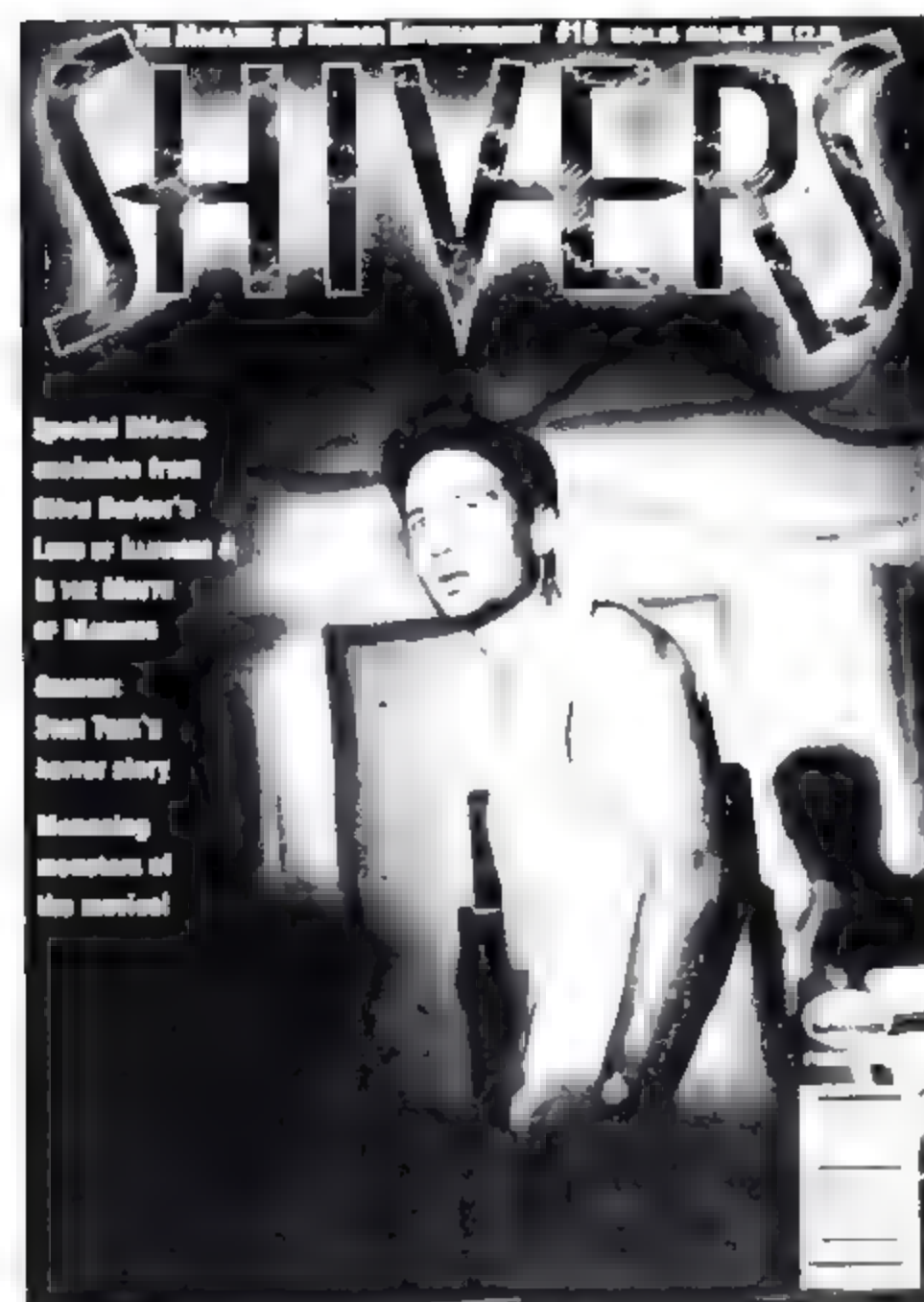
#66 May 1995

XF cover mention
XF episode guide by Marc Shapiro (pages 16-17)
XF video review by Richard Houldsworth (5 page)(pages 29-30)

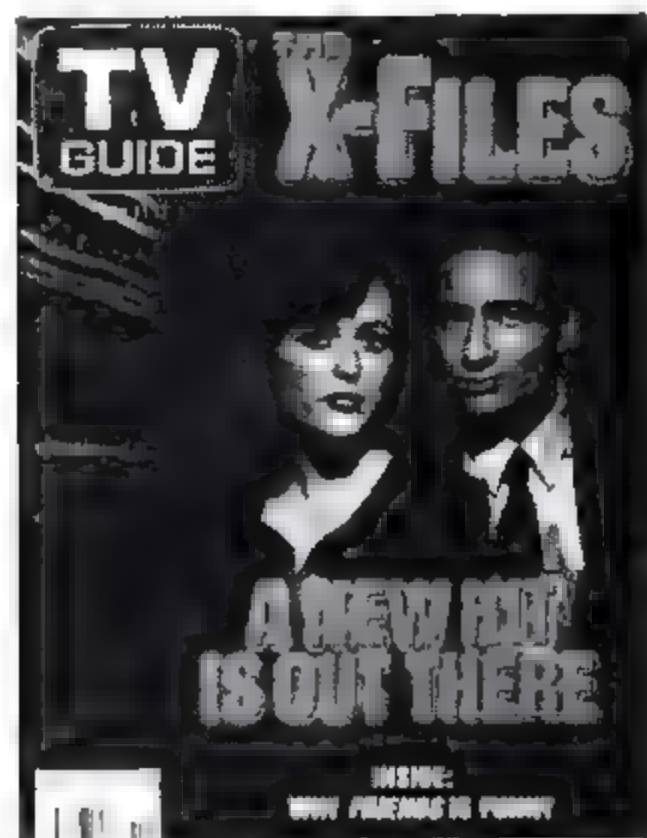
US

#189 October 1993

Spotlight: David Duchovny by Joe Rhodes
Duchovny Article (page 48)

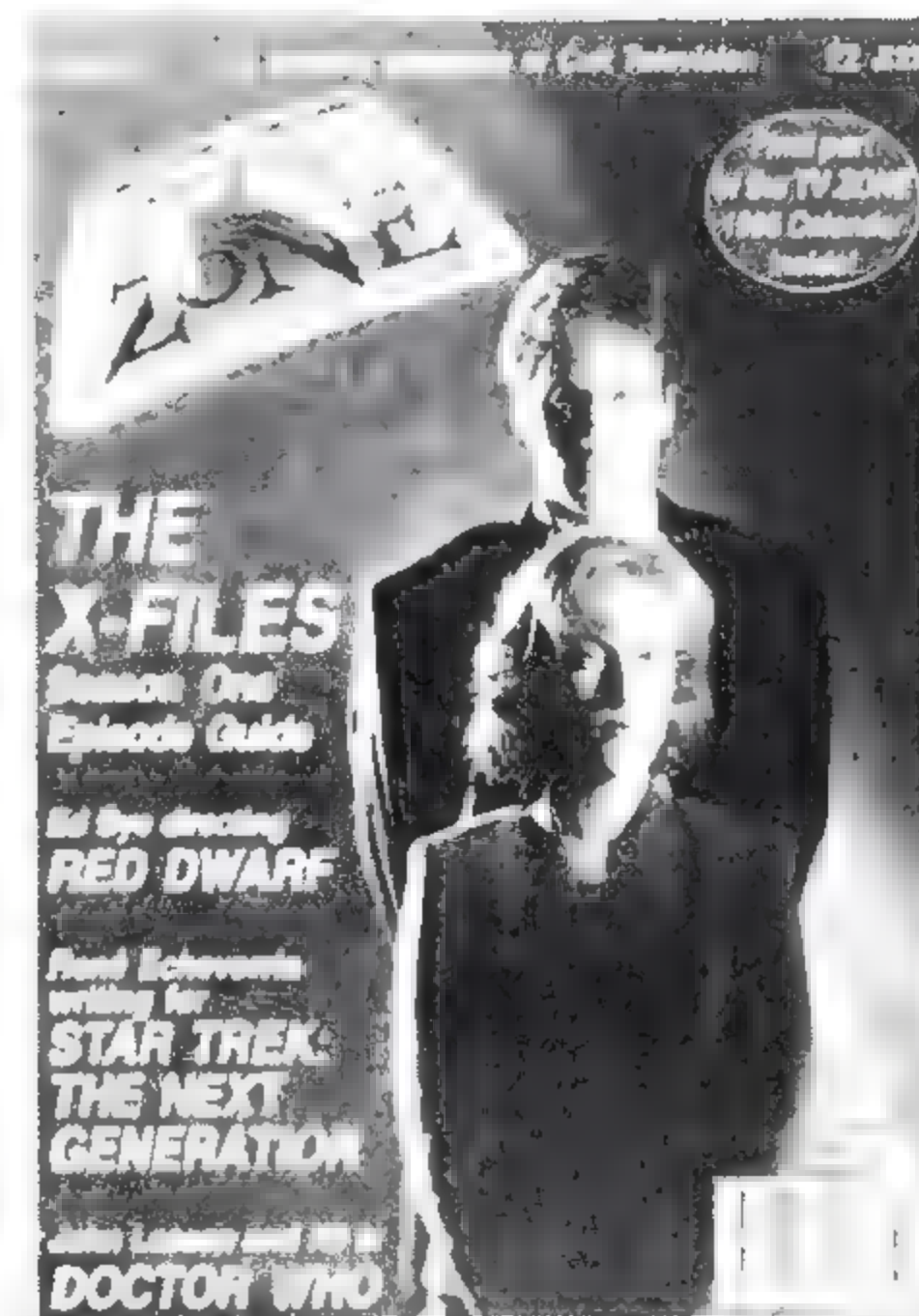


- #200 September 1994
Strange Brew by Steve Pond
 XF article (pages 58-59)
- #208 May 1995
Secret Agent Man by Steve Pond
 Duchovny article (3.15 pages)(pages 80-83, 93)
- USA TODAY**
 February 18, 1994
"X" marks the spot for eeriness by Matt Roush
 Carter interview (.25 page 3D)
- May 13, 1994
Savor Spooky X-Files by Matt Roush
 XF article (5 paragraphs, page 1D)
- August 12, 1994
X-Files is earning top-drawer respect by Matt Roush
 XF article (page 3D)
- September 16, 1994
Under Suspicion aims high; X-Files terrifies by Matt Roush
 Part XF article (page 3D)
 XF ad (.33 page 8D)
- October 14, 1994
Fridays take dramatic turn by Matt Roush
 XF preview (3 paragraphs and photo) (page 3D)
- December 29, 1994
1994 Best/Worst; ER caps a surge in serious fare by Matt Roush
 XF mention (1 paragraph, page 2D)
- January 18, 1995
Comic X-stacy by Arlene Vigoda
 XF comic book article (1 paragraph) and illustration (page 1D)
- February 17, 1995
X-Files finds rapt fans in its quest for truth by Matt Roush
 XF article (.2 page 3D)
- May 19, 1995
Cliffhangers keep viewers tuned to Fox by Matt Roush
 XF mention and photo (pages D1-2)
- USA WEEKEND**
 March 26, 1995
 Duchovny mention (Q&A page)
- VARIETY**
 September 13, 1993
 XF article by Tony Scott (page 36)
- VISIONS**
 #1 Autumn 1995
Space: The New Program from the Producers of The X-Files by Paula Vitaris
 Morgan/Wong interview (1 3 pages)(pages 5, 6)
Nothing to Fear: The Horrors of Prime-Time Television by Patricia L. Moire
 Part XF article (1.8 pages)(pages 7, 60)
- WIZARD**
 #4 April 1995
File Under X by Michael Berry
 XF comic article/Petrucha interview (pages 86-88)
- WIRED**
 September 1994
Scare Tactics by Adam Rogers
 XF article (.2 page 142)



- WONDER**
 #10 Spring 1995
 XF cover mention
Xploring the X-Files: Meeting the Reality You Thought You Knew by Lint Hatcher
 XF article (pages 36-49)
The X-Files Mini Episode Guide (pages 49-50)
- WORLD**
 January 14, 1995
Generation X-Files by Gene Edward Veith
 XF article (1 page)(pages 22-23)
- WRAPPED IN PLASTIC**
 #6 August 1993
The World Spins
 XF mention (1 paragraph page 29)
 (also 1.25-page review of Duchovny's *Red Shoe Diaries* with photo)
- #7 October 1993
 XF cover mention
The X-Files: Exciting Silliness
 XF review (page 29)
- #9 February 1994
Letters
 XF discussion (5 page 24)
Twin Peaks Actors Appearing in Numerous Films!
 XF mention (page 30)
The World Spins: Et Cetera
 XF mention (page 31)
- #10 April 1994
Letters
 XF discussion (1 page, pages 18-19)
Twin Peaks Actors on Screen
 XF mention (page 27)
X-Files Update
 XF article (.33 page, pages 28-29)
- #11 June 1994
X-Files News
 XF article (.15 page 28)
The World Spins: Et Cetera
 XF mention (page 30)
- #12 August 1994 (second printing October 1994)
 XF cover
An Appointment with Dr. Scully
 Anderson interview (pages 3-5)
Rush to Judgment? WIP Conspires to Re-examine The X-Files
 XF essay (pages 6-9)
The X-Files Episode Guide
 First season guide and commentary (pages 9-26)
X-Files Magazine Checklist
 Checklist (page 27)
The Truth is Way Out There by Bryan Yamashiro
 XF/UFO essay (2.25 pages)(pages 28-31)
X-Files News
 XF news items (.25 page)(pages 43-44)
The X-Files Makes Cover to TV Guide (Sorta')
 XF article (.5 page 44)
- #13 October 1994
 XF cover mention
X-Files Extra!
 XF articles and reviews (3.5 pages) (pages 35-38)
- #14 December 1994
Agent Cooper, Twin Peaks, and the Rewriting of the FBI Agent by Michele Malach
 XF mentions (pages 4, 5)
Letters
 XF discussions (about 3 pages)(pages 19-22)
X-Files Extra!
 XF articles and reviews (pages 29-31)
- #15 February 1995
Letters
 XF discussions (.3 page 18)
X-Files Extra!
 XF articles and reviews (pages 29-31)
- #16 April 1995
Sheryl Lee Retrospective: Red Shoe Diaries

- Duchovny photo; RSD review (1 page) (pages 17-18)
X-Files Extra!
 XF article and reviews (pages 40-44)
- #17 June 1995
X-Files Extra!
 XF articles and reviews (pages 36-38)
- X-PHILE, THE**
 #1 September/October 1994 (counterfeits known to exist)
 XF cover
 XF articles and interviews (24 pages)
- #2 November/December 1994
 XF cover
 XF articles, interviews, and fiction (40 pages)
- #3 January/February 1995
 XF cover
 XF articles and interviews (44 pages)
- #4 March/April 1995
 XF cover
 XF articles and interviews (28 pages)
- #5 May/June 1995
 XF cover
 XF articles and interviews (44 pages)
- X-FILES, THE (comic book)**
 #1 January 1995
 XF cover by Miran Kim
Not to be Opened Until X-mas by Stefan Petrucha and Charles Adlard
- #2 February 1995
 XF cover by Kim
The Dismemberance of Things Past by Petrucha and Adlard
- #3 March 1995
 XF cover by Kim
A Little Dream of Me by Petrucha and Adlard
- #4 April 1995
 XF cover by Kim
Firebird Part One: Khobka's Lament by Petrucha and Adlard
- #5 May 1995
 XF cover by Kim
Firebird Part Two: Crescit Eundo by Petrucha and Adlard
- X-FILES, THE (England) (magazine-sized)**
 #1 June 1995
 Same cover and story as U.S. edition
 Free metal badge attached to cover
 Bonus back-up features (6 pages)
- #2 July 1995
 XF photo cover
 Same story as U.S. edition
 Free XF postcard attached to cover
 Bonus back-up features (6 pages)
- X-FILES SPECIAL EDITION, THE**
 #1 June 1995
 Reprints comics #1-#3



For the past year, we have been receiving—both at Spectrum and Wrapped in Plastic—repeated requests to publish a feature about ABC's *My So-Called Life*. The letters generally say something along the lines that this series is "the best thing on TV right now" or "the best show since *Twin Peaks*." We disagree, even though this puts us at odds with most of the reviews for the show. In fact, we've read only two pieces critical of the series—Harry Stein's "Dissenting view: Why I've given up on *So-Called Life*" (9/24/94 TV Guide) and, our favorite, Lee Sandlin's great essay reprinted here. It originally appeared in *The Chicago Reader* (10/21/94).

Whose So-Called Life?

by Lee Sandlin

Network executives are never comfortable making judgment calls about quality—it distracts them when they're analyzing the market research—so they tend instead to think of it as a marketing category. A "quality show" is a particular genre of programming, with a distinct style and a limited appeal. It's moody and downbeat with arty photography, the cast is made up of professional actors rather than stand-up comics or faded movie stars, and nothing ever explodes. Its target audience is TV critics. A quality show invariably collects reviews so rapturous they amount to a kind of spiritual bullying. Reviewers threaten to beat up any network drone who'd dare to cancel a quality show; and they despair for the commonwealth because their new favorite show draws such pathetically low ratings. That's the true mark of quality: under the weight of its rave reviews it sinks like a stone into the Nielsen abyss and is off the schedule by Christmas.

This year's quality show is ABC's *My So-Called Life*. It's such a perfect example of the genre it'll probably be gone by Thanksgiving. By Christmas, it'll already be in heavy rotation on A&E or Bravo, where deceased quality shows go to be taped and treasured by their admirers, as if each episode of their tragically curtailed runs were as precious as a Vermeer.

But I won't be setting my VCR. The title and promos were kind of promising; they gave me the wild hope that ABC was going to take us into the realm of phenomenology, by giving us the case study of a teenage girl afflicted with what Heidegger used to call "inauthentic existence"—the metaphysical horror of the dining room table, the existential dread of phys ed. No such luck. What *My So-Called Life* actually is is yet another damn show about the American family—its problems, its triumphs, its enduring strength as a subject for a TV series.

Of course, it being the 90s and all, we can't buy into the old model wholesale. Mom and dad in particular have had to be reworked. In the primordial Donna Reed version, dad was a smug patriarchal bully

and mom a radiant earth mother. By the mid-70s when we all thought of ourselves as cynical and burned-out (those were the days), the quality family show was called *Family* (it was a great age for generic TV; the quality cop show was called *Police Story*). On *Family* dad was worried about losing his job and mom was darkly troubled about being, you know, unfulfilled. Now we're in the Clinton 90s: the dad in *My So-Called Life* is a mealy-mouthed compromiser and mom is a tough, driven careerist. Younger than their prototypes and too successful too early, they perpetually spout opium clouds of psychobabble even though they remain basically clueless. At least the daughter

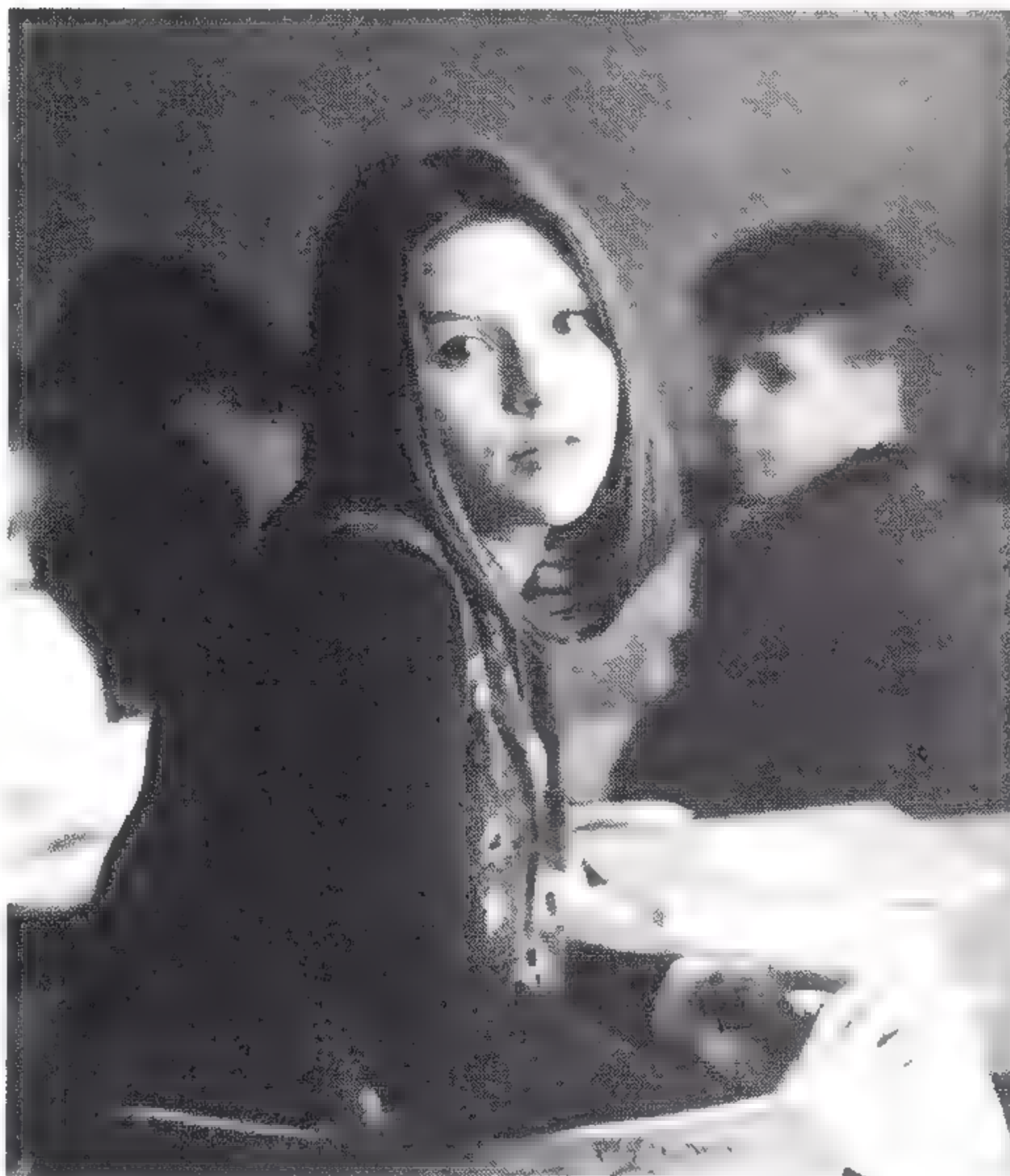
unreachably lost in despair, can be shown as a moody silhouette melting into the pervading gloom.

This is the sole contribution the show makes to the quality form: it's very big on style. The average TV show these days is so pathetically eager to please that it's more overloaded with plot than a Jacobean tragedy. *My So-Called Life* tries to get rid of plot altogether. It tells arty, oblique, quotidian stories so thick with verisimilitude your own talk during the commercials starts to sound fake. One whole episode was about an unluckily located pimple. Everybody on the show is always chattering at once, overloading my TV's tinny little speaker with portents and indirections and half-finished arguments—mom wants dad to take dancing lessons, Angela wants to fool mom and dad about where she's going, and the younger daughter has yet to finish a single sentence about anything. I suppose I'm going to have to get Dolby sound to follow it all. The only time the bickering stops is when they get to a "moment."

A lazy scriptwriter's gesture at deep significance, a moment is that sudden pause, pregnant with unspoken meaning, when one family member suddenly understands something about another family member—like why mom was so angry at breakfast this morning about that new haircut, or why the younger daughter's feelings were hurt about not being able to take saxophone lessons. These moments are actually the whole point of each show: the little milestones in the teenage heroine's slow process of growing up.

Quality shows have always made a big deal over moments. In the old days they were given a huge buildup, the sort that

Norman Lear used to specialize in (to prove that his dreary screechfests were actually important artistic statements): after twenty-five minutes of shattering whoops and roars and yells from the aurally enhanced studio audience, the moment would arrive, the camera would focus on an actor's stricken face in a punishing close-up, and the soundtrack would suddenly grow hushed, as if an explosive decompression had left the studio audience gasping for air. The actor would softly say "I'm an alcoholic" or "I was an abused child" or "I am Spartacus"—and then, like the rush of fresh oxygen into



Claire Danes starred as Angela Chase in *My So-Called Life*

isn't named Chelsea.

But everything else is the same. The house is the same house every family in the history of American TV has ever lived in—are they taking turns renting it, or do they successively default on the mortgage? The only difference I can see is that on *My So-Called Life* the lighting isn't as searingly bright as on the sitcom version, where you get a sunburn from the kitchen scenes. The inky shadows in every room guarantee that anytime there's a desperately serious conversation—about once every five minutes or so—the speaker or listener, whoever's most

Lee Sandlin writes a monthly TV column for *The Chicago Reader*. His essay "Invasion of the Plot Snatchers" (about *The X-Files* and *Homicide*) appeared in *Spectrum* 3.

the vacuum, there would follow a thunder storm of electronic applause.

The executive producers of *My So-Called Life*, Marshall Herskovitz and Edward Zwick, have actually invented an even more annoying form of moment announcement: a quick guitar reprise of a bar or two of the theme music, like an audio underline. They used it first in their earlier show, *Thirtysomething*—where the characters were so persecuted by that guitar you thought they were living in a coffeehouse with a really obnoxious live act. On *My So-Called Life* it's even harder to keep up with all the musical insight.

Young Angela is living on a slippery slope of revelation: every step triggers a landslide of moments about her parents, her friends, the mysteries of human motivation, her whole struggle to grow up and be an adult. In one episode she tried to sneak into a bar and—through a chain of fluky plot ricochets that would have baffled Minnesota Fats—ended up discovering that her father might be having an affair and that her mother was unhappy with her whole dreary life. In another, her father tried to break through her shell of silence (I'm not sure I've got this right, but I think she wasn't speaking to him because she suspected the affair—which she didn't know he had in fact decided not to go through with) by giving her a pair of Grateful Dead tickets. In a stunning fit of narrative speed, she immediately scalped them. I can't begin to unravel the concatenated crises that followed—but ultimately father and daughter had a really big moment, maybe the biggest they'd had in years. Not that either of them mentioned a word about what was actually wrong; that would have been too vulgar and straight forward. Instead they stood awkwardly together on the front porch of the house and talked about what music they liked. The scene was so charged with poetic intensity about generational change, I was surprised when it didn't end with the Byrds singing "Turn, Turn, Turn."

I don't know; maybe it's just me. My memories of my teenage years are ancient and drug-hazed, but I don't remember having moments with my parents about anything. Most of my friends back then were reluctant to admit they even had parents, much less that they cared about making some kind of emotional breakthrough in their dealings with them. If we'd made a show about ourselves then, it would have been about a kind of exhilarating autonomy—the rush of sudden freedom so well described by Philip Larkin:

*And every life became
A brilliant breaking of the bank,
A quite unlosable game.*

It would have been made up of wild gusts of melodrama, a roundelay of sexual entanglements, unforgivable betrayals that were forgotten a week later—and parents who were somehow both marginalized and

central, titanic obstacles and remote zones of permanence: a world, in other words, very much like *Beverly Hills 90210*.

Realism is a slippery business. Nobody is ever going to call Aaron Spelling TV's heir to Zola and Flaubert—but *90210* and *Melrose Place* in their brief prime (both are now pale self-parodies) really did describe a mental landscape I could recognize. I thought of them as operas: after all the lurid silliness of an opera is closer to the feel of passion than a naturalistic novel could ever be. Granted, Spelling's shows are corrupt twaddle, but they do, or anyway once did, feel right; *My So-Called Life* feels like a shell game. All that quality is there only to hide something much darker and nastier.

If a teenage girl wouldn't describe her so-called life like this, an adult might, looking back. Teenagers don't give a damn about their family's psychodynamics. Adults, particularly those in therapy, are obsessed with them. Teenagers don't think about whether this or that event is making them more adult: what makes teenagers so tiresome, even to other teenagers, is that they think they're grown up already. But adults think of themselves as adolescents



Bess Armstrong, Lisa Wilhoit, Tom Irwin, and Claire Danes

and ransack every event in their lives for signs that they're finally growing up. Adults are also the ones (especially if they have literary pretensions) who've learned from reading John Updike, or some other old-style *New Yorker* writer, that quality art consists of those little epiphanic moments surrounded by a lot of naturalistic blather. And adults can't help feeling that their lives would become whole again if they'd only succeeded in attaining their adolescent erotic ideal—and that, I think, is the real point of the show.

David Lynch once said that he got the

idea for *Blue Velvet* from his adolescent fantasies, where the most erotic idea he could imagine was hiding in a girl's bedroom closet overnight. I am absolutely certain that the producers of this show had the same fantasy. Not since *Thirtysomething* has any show been as neurotic about women. Oh, I know there are a lot of women in the production credits of *My So-Called Life*; but they were there in the credits of *Thirtysomething*, too, and it was more oppressively masculine than *The A-Team*. On *Thirtysomething*, every cataclysmically jerkish failing of the male characters was relentlessly explored, understood, and excused. And as for the female characters—if they were single, they were written off as kooky and harmless; if married, they were seen as loomingly inscrutable and perverse. The message was, the closer you get to a woman, the more unreadable she becomes.

My So-Called Life is even more regressive—it devises an unthreatening female image the producers can understand, cherish, protect, and leer at simultaneously. Claire Danes, the actress who plays the girl, is at once gawkily charming and oddly grave, as though she were in touch with her dark side a little too early—and you can see how she'd be just the kind of girl these brany producers would have gone for back when they were in high school. They have even made sure that the dreamy guy she's got a crush on is an uncomfortable thug, setting her up for heartache before they maneuver into place some more appropriate author-surrogate for her to fall in love with.

Now, I'm broad-minded: I'm not going to condemn anybody for finding a girl as achingly nubile as Claire Danes desirable, no matter how underage she might be. What I object to is the predictability. Every time TV does a quality show with a female lead, sooner or later the only issue is her sex life. The producers stopped caring about the days in *The Days and Nights of Molly Dodd*; *China Beach* eventually dropped that whole downbeat Vietnam thing so it could concentrate on conjuring up salacious adventures for its romantically burned-out heroine. If *My So-Called Life* somehow lasts for more than a season, it will surely focus with lazerlike intensity on young

Angela's virginity. By then, of course, the show will be long gone from the network, and already revived, with a much lower budget, on cable—so the really big moment, when it finally arrives, will look like *Sorority Babes in the Slimeball Bowl-O-Rama*.

But cable is probably the ideal place for a show like this one, anyway. The fewer viewers, the better—after all, when you're filming your sexual fantasy, the ideal number of viewers is one.

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AN INTERVIEW WITH ADAM HUGHES: GHOST STORIES AND INDIANA JONES!

Hot on the heels of Dark Horse's new monthly Ghost comic book, Adam Hughes visited Dallas as a guest of the Dallas Fantasy Fair in April 1995. Despite a grueling weekend of sketching, more sketching, and still more sketching, an exhausted Adam kindly met with Spectrum editor Craig Miller for the following interview on the evening of the 15th.

Our thanks to Adam Hughes for granting a generous amount of time, allowing us to explore in some depth the work of this extraordinary young artist.

Miller: Ghost is your first monthly comic book series in four years—since Justice League. Was there something in particular about Ghost that encouraged your return, or were you just ready to get back to a monthly book?

Hughes: I was ready to get back in, and Ghost seemed the most viable project to make that—at least—at a monthly book. I won't lie to anybody and say I'm succeeding. But Ghost was the right character—she was associated with me even though I didn't create her, and I thought everything was right, so I'm giving it my best shot.

CM: Did you have several offers for monthly books?

AH: No. Everybody seems to think that I can just walk into any editor's office and demand work. No, the only other monthly book I was offered was *Legionnaires*, and that didn't work out, so Ghost was the alternative.

CM: What appealed to you in particular about Ghost?

AH: Well, I got to do all the things I would want to do if I could draw the Batman or the Shadow, but since nobody will let me draw those characters, I'll do it with my own character.

CM: How long has this been in the works? When you did the fourteen-page Comics

Greatest World issue a couple of years ago, did you have any idea you might end up doing it as a monthly title?

AH: No, at that point it was just me doing a favor for Barbara Kesel at Dark Horse. I thought, I'll just do these fourteen pages, and that's it. At that point I was saying, there's no way I'm going to be doing a monthly book—there's no way ever. Of course, today I'm saying there's no way I'm doing a monthly book! No, it was all very spontaneous.

CM: In the first issue, you've used Orson Welles as the model for Mr. McMillan. Was this in the script or added by you?

AH: Oh, it's me, it's me! All the cool stuff is added by me! [Laughter] I'm a colossal

Orson Welles fan, and I had to work him into the comic somehow. So I decided to make him the romantic interest in the book, and that of course sparked the writer—the writer of the book is Eric Luke, a screenwriter who lives in Studio City, California, and went to UCLA, so he's Mr. Hollywood—he's even got a couple of Orson Welles stories. He was totally jazzed by the idea of having Orson Welles in our comic.

CM: So this is a major continuing character.

AH: He wasn't supposed to be; I made him a continuing character!

CM: I think you said in San Diego last year that you liked the visual contrast of Welles in black versus Ghost in white. Did that play any part, or are you just wild about Welles?

AH: It's just that I'm studying a lot of his films—they're very educational. Comics and films are bastard cousins. You can see a lot of films that are borrowing from comics these days. I'm not meaning literally, like the *Tank Girl* movie, the character borrowed from comics. But comics and movies are like the two biggest visual storytelling media that are around nowadays. There's going to be a tendency for one to influence the other.

As far as the earlier part of the question, I thought that if Ghost is going to be all in white, the love interest should be all in black—it was important.

CM: Do you think you would ever have any interest in doing film work as far as storyboarding or anything else, or are you primarily interested in comics?

AH: Well...comics is all I'm good at. It would be fun to dip my toes in other waters, but it's not something I'm actively pursuing. If it happens, it would be fun; it would be neat to have on my résumé. I mean, Dave Stevens turned down the job of doing storyboards on *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. So there's a certain amount of prestige even to refusing work. [Laughter] I wouldn't mind



A drawing of Andromeda intended as a spot illo for *Legionnaires* 7.

Andromeda © 1995 DC Comics



© 1995 Adam Hughes

Above: the Krimsson Kaiser, a proposed card for the Creators Universe card set. They rejected it because of the swastikas. "But he's a World War II *villain!*" Adam explained to no avail. All American Girl has vowed to defeat the Krimsson one.



it if it would pay some bills and be fun.

CM: Do you have any film background? Classes?

AH: "I is ignorant. [Laughter] I done graduated the sixth grade!" I have no formal education. I lost my diploma from high school. [Laughter]

CM: You lost it...?

AH: I lost it.

CM: You can't find it.

AH: Meaning it doesn't count! I am completely self-taught. So everything I'm learning about comics, and anything I've learned about film, is just hours spent either in front of the TV or at a library.

CM: How much photo reference do you use?

AH: NONE!!! [Laughter] All caps with three exclamation points please! It's hard to say. That's a question that gets asked to me a lot.

CM: I'm wondering about the figure work in particular. I assume if you need to draw, say, a tractor, you'd get reference like everybody else. But for the pin-ups, a lot of other artists appear to be just turning Sports Illustrated swimsuit issue pages into superhero drawings.

AH: Does it look like I'm doing that?

CM: No.

AH: I never used to use reference because I was terrified of it. It's that old stigma, you know, "You didn't draw that; you copied it! You suck! I'm going to beat you up!" [Laughter] I was always afraid of it. But on the *Star Trek* graphic novel, I learned a good way for me to use it. I was always afraid to use it in another respect—I didn't want to become dependent upon it. I didn't want reference to become a crutch, so that I could not draw unless I had reference in front of me. And I don't need it. But I use it to improve my work to the next level. And I use it in reverse. Most people would start with a piece of reference and draw the artwork from it. I draw what I want, and then I find different pieces of reference that will help me perform quality control on each separate part of the artwork. For example, on the Catwoman T-shirt that I've done for Graphitti Designs, with her leaping very ballet-like with money in one hand

and lots of animals behind her, and Gotham City, I sketched it out the way I wanted it. That was approved by DC. I transferred that to the art board, and then if I felt that there was a certain part of the anatomy that I wasn't sure I was portraying correctly, I would look at a picture of an athlete, a ballerina, a dancer, something like that that would help me get the form right. A lot of the times for lighting and shading, I'll have a mannequin head or something, and I'll turn my desk lamp on it and see the way the shadows fall across the face. It's really good because that way I find that I learn the lesson of that reference; it's burned into my brain so the next time, I don't need it.

There's this big stigma about using your eyes. A lot of comic book artists are afraid to look at the real world and see how it works because they think that means they have to draw like Drew Friedman, that it has to be photo-realistic pointillism. And it doesn't. The people who do the best abstract, the best exaggerated comic book art, like the Marvel style where it's exaggerated for dynamic effect, the people who do that best are the guys that know the rules, because they know how to break them now. It's like the Mike Goldens and the Art Adams and the Walt Simonsons, they know how a body's really put together, so they know how much they can bend it and shape it and twist it, to make it a super-dynamic, off the wall, cool superhero. I personally am a bigger fan of the more naturalistic school of comic book art and that's what I'm going for, so I use reference, but I can guarantee you that I don't use it in the way most people think. I can show them a page, and they'll say, "You used reference on that." And I'll go, "No, not a lick." And I'll show them something else that they didn't even think I would have—I'll show them something like Ghost's robes,

or the way hair falls across a shoulder—I might use some reference to make sure I get the lighting right on that. I'll use twenty different things just to fix somebody's face if it needs it. I learned that working on *Star Trek*, because working on that, everything is reference. The characters, their costumes, their hairpieces, their uniforms, the ships—the interiors, the exteriors—it's all reference. And you've got to be able to cobble together an image from vary disparate sources.

CM: You just described your work as "naturalistic." How would you distinguish that from "realistic"?

AM: If it was realistic, you would go, "Oh look, a photograph." Realistic just didn't quite jibe when someone described me that way. Cully Hamner came up with the term "naturalistic." It cannot be mistaken for anything other than what it is—graphic representation of the real world, but it's still the abstraction of black line versus white background. It's not an attempt to do shapes that are defined by light and form and shading; it's—here's the shape, black line; here's not the shape, white. That's the basic of pen and ink comic book art, and I'm just trying to give the characters as much weight and "naturalness" as possible—that you could know them, or reach out and touch them, or meet them.

CM: A technical question on the *Ghost* comic: in the scenes where Ghost is supposed to be invisible to those around her, the hard black lines are replaced by gray lines. Do you have to draw these figures on overlays?

AH: No. That's the thing with computers nowadays. The old photographic processes are gone, and everything is done in the computer. They scan the black line art into the computer. There are sixteen million-plus colors that the computer can generate to color the comic, and every one of those colors can be used in the process of taking the black line artwork and turning it into another color in any percentage from one percent to one hundred percent with any color combination. So the black line artwork of Ghost can be any color we want and any degree of light or darkness.

CM: The first issue was colored beautifully. *Digital Chameleon* is listed as the color separator, but no colorist is credited. Did you do it yourself?

AH: Lovern Kindzierski at Digital Chameleon did the colors. It's his company. He isn't doing any more of them because Dark Horse wants to do all the colors in-house, and Lovern only does colors when he can do the separations as well. And I don't blame him. He's got a facility that allows him as an artist to be creative and do what he wants, and he also can do the separations. The biggest problem with computers nowadays is that any chimp can use a computer. But you still need an artist sitting there who has sensibilities and temperament and talent. And Lovern is an artist; his tool is not the airbrush or the pen—his tool is the computer. And he can use it better than most people.



An Adam Hughes pencil sketch



Here is an unused, penciled version of the cover to Star Trek: The Modala Imperative 2. We're not sure why this one was rejected (we like it better than the published version!).

CM: You said in Atlanta a couple of years ago something to the effect that you were more obsessive about the quality of your drawing than you'd ever been. Does this slow you down considerably?

AH: Sure! Yes. No explanation; it's yes, period.

CM: You're splitting art chores on Ghost with Matt Haley. How fast are you able to turn out pages nowadays?

AH: Incredibly slow. I'm so far behind that—

CM: You shouldn't be doing this interview! [Laughter]

AH: I shouldn't even be in Dallas! [Laughter] I'm really behind on Ghost, and if I say exactly how far behind I'll burst into flames.

CM: Your Ghost art has an Art Nouveau look, particularly Alphonse Mucha. Was this determined by the design of the character, or did your interest in Mucha just happen to coincide with this assignment?

AH: It sort of created the interest. I was studying a lot of Alphonse Mucha's poster work because he's mostly pen and-ink, and it's very comic book oriented if you look back at it, and I was looking at some sort of visual solutions for the fabric of Ghost's clothing—no more, no less. I didn't want the book to have an Art Nouveau look. Actually, I want Ghost to

have an Art Deco look—I want that forties retro look. I want guys with fedoras saying, "Listen you mugs! Go out and get that Ghost! See?" [Laughter] Like he pushes a button, and they all drop to the floor. That's what I want in Ghost. I've studied the Art Nouveau stuff just for Ghost herself—just so the robes would have this ethereal, gossamer quality to them. For some reason the cover to the collected edition—which started out as a calendar illustration; Dark Horse just said, "Do whatever you want." I went, well, I bought all these Art Nouveau books, let me see if I can pull off one Art Nouveau piece. It was just an experiment; I just did it in a day. And it's now turned into this, you know, "Ghost is Art Nouveau! Adam Hughes is ripping off Alphonse Mucha! Story at eleven!"

CM: Your art has always distanced itself from the hyper-detailed rendering styles of McFarlane, Lee, Liefeld, etc. Who would you list as your primary art influences?

AH: Inside or outside of comics?

CM: Both.

AH: Inside of comics, as a waif, I worked my way through being a Jack Kirby fan to George Pérez and John Byrne. And I was well on my way to being just a nice, happy, page-a-day superhero artist at that point. And Steve Rude and Jaime Hernandez turned me around, and I learned that good comic book art could be anything you

wanted it to be; it didn't have to be about superheroes. Dave Stevens taught me more about inking than anybody ever will. Mike Mignola and Kevin Nowlan are two of my guys that I'm just really jazzed by now.

CM: Early on your art reminded me of Alan Davis. Did you look much at his work?

AH: No. That's what everybody says. I love Alan Davis's stuff, but he wasn't one of the guys that I was actively learning from. It was just, "Hey, the latest *Excalibur* is out; cool." And I'd disappear for a half hour and read it.

CM: Both Rude and Hernandez work with very clean styles, as you do. Before you discovered their work, did you go more for the hyper-rendering, or did they just fit into what you were already doing?

AH: No, because this was the summer of '87 when I had my epiphany, and at that point, everybody was so neurotic about their artwork that they figured the more ink they put on the page, the better it was. Let's just put it this way. I looked so much like John Byrne at that point, I was like John Byrne after a really grisly transporter accident. I still have some of that artwork. I'll probably print that some day just as a gag.

CM: How much are you influenced by your Gaijin Studio partners?

AH: Those bastards? None of them! [Laughter] They're all chimps! [Laughter] No, the Gaijin guys, I love 'em. I moved to Atlanta to learn how to paint from Brian Stelfreeze and to work with inker Karl Story. And I've learned so much about painting from Brian. But it's just the cohabitation with six, seven, eight other illustrators, you pick up stuff anyway, whether it's an active lesson you might have learned by them telling you, "Don't do this; please do that," or whether it just comes from playful rivalry: "That guy just drew a hell of an establishing shot; I'm going to have to beat that." So there's been an influence, although we have set up these Gaijin "evolutionary chains," and we don't know where it starts, and we don't know where it ends, but I'm at one end, and Brian Stelfreeze is at the other.

CM: I've noticed in your painting and color work, it started out being very Dave



Marvel business card



SkyBox DC card

"Winter" by Alphonse Mucha

Stevens-ish, but in the last couple of years it's shifted to a Drew Struzan/Brian Stelfreeze look. I'm assuming that's intentional.

AH: You are right, sir! Brian Stelfreeze is teaching me how to paint, and Drew Struzan is my greatest living illustration hero, so it's going to look like that until I develop my own style. I'm in no rush. When you go to a fine Parisian painting academy, they teach you how to paint like the masters before you can learn how to paint for yourself, and I'm still very much a student—actively a student of Brian Stelfreeze, and passively a student of guys like Drew Struzan and his contemporaries.



Drew Struzan's Indiana Jones

CM: Who are some of your other non-comics influences? Bob Peak, maybe?

AH: No, no, no. Brian Stelfreeze loves Bob Peak, and I really appreciate what Bob Peak does, but I'm over in the Drew side of the ring. Norman Rockwell is a giant influence. A lot of people like to snub their noses at the well-known names; people like to throw out all the other names from the Brandywine school—Pyle and Wyeth and all this stuff, and they like to dump on Rockwell because he was the Everyman's illustrator. But the thing I like to go for is very convincing characters, but they're still characters, they're not real people. They're characters—they're exaggerated caricatures of people. That's what Rockwell was great at, and that's what I like about his work.

Dean Cornwell is another guy. I'm getting into his paintings, but I've always loved looking at his preliminaries and his pencils. I know a pencil backwards and forwards. Paint brush? I don't know a paint brush. When somebody's speaking your own language, it's much easier to get into the mastery of what they're doing.

CM: You're primarily known for the "good girl" type of art. Are there any of those artists you particularly like?

AH: Yeah. Jon Whitcomb, Austin Briggs; recently, now that the trading cards have come out and he's become popular, it's easy to find Gil Elvgren's work; those are the guys I'm really into. I just recently got into George Petty. I know everybody would think that up till now, I've been into him, but no, I'm sorry. Just recently I've discov-



A Gil Elvgren trading card

ered these guys. The popularity of trading cards has made them available to somebody who doesn't have a million bucks to go buy old issues of *Esquire*.

CM: How much preliminary drawing do you do in preparing a page?

AH: A page? I just do a thumbnail. If it's a particularly dicey layout,



A George Petty trading card

I might draw it first, because I use erasers more than I use pencils! Sometimes I'll do my thumbnails really tight; sometimes I'll just do little stick figures. It all depends on how much sugar I had for breakfast.

CM: Your earliest comics work was for black and white comics, right?

AH: I had done a little work for *Blood of Dracula* for Apple Comics. Later, Adventure Comics was looking for some other people to join in. Back then, there were a lot of people getting in on the black and white boom, and I was one of them that was able to get in because of black and white comics.

CM: Then your first color series was Maze Agency.

AH: Yeah. Diana Schutz saw some of my artwork at a Philadelphia comic book convention and gave me a call. I tried out for Maze Agency and lost the first time. Then the first penciler of the book didn't work out, and I was the back-up guy.

CM: And from there, the Justice League?

AH: Yeah. When The Maze Agency got canned, they told me, "Don't tell anybody for a day," because Comico was cutting back on a lot of their books, and they didn't want other creators to find out that their books had been canned until they had called them first. So they said, "Don't call anybody up at DC"—because I had been offered *Justice League*—"for about a day or so. Can you wait a day?" And I go, yeah okay. And like an hour and a half later I got a call from Andy Helfer: "I heard Maze Agency got canceled!" [Laughter] So that's the longest I've been unemployed in comics since 1987.

CM: Are there any projects along the way that you've turned down that, in retrospect, you wish you would have taken?

AH: Uh, yeah. I got offered *X-Men* stuff. I kinda said, [sheepishly] "No." After *Justice League* was over, I had a meeting with some of the higher-ups at DC, and they asked, "What do you want to do?" And I just said, "Nuthin'."

I spend so much time regretting what I'm doing, I don't have time to worry about regretting what I've done in the past.

CM: What time period did the *X-Men* offer come?

AH: This would have been around the time

Jim Lee was working on the book.

CM: Especially since the Justice League days, you've been known mostly for your ability to draw beautiful women. Have you received any criticism for such portrayals? Any angry women's groups?



A 1990 Marvel staff Christmas card

AH: Uh, no. Most of the negative comments I get end up being qualifications, anyway. I've had several "feministas" come up to me at conventions and go, [deep voice] "I really hate the way women are portrayed in comics nowadays! [girlish, sing songsy voice] But there's something about the way you do it that makes it okay!" It's like, okay, sure, whatever you say, as long as I don't get hit by a burning bra.

CM: At a panel yesterday, you suggested that you were a little ambivalent about your Penthouse Comix work you enjoyed doing it, but you wouldn't want to get—

AH: It's not subject matter that—uh, there was a line there that was crossed that I don't like to cross. But it pays the bills.

CM: But it's not what you'd want to do for the rest of your comics career.

AH: It's funny. People go, "Wow, he loves drawing those gorgeous babes, I bet he'd love it even more if they had no clothes on!" But it's not true. At that point, it ceases to become good, fun, just-teasing kind of artwork. It's kind of in-your-face. I'd rather not do that. It's like, I lost all interest in Madonna when I saw the sex book. The only thing I need to see of her now is a CAT scan [laughter] and I don't want people to look at one of the women that I draw and just go, "Ah, I've seen her naked already. Who cares?"

CM: You've done a little bit of work for Image. Have you ever considered taking your own characters and going the self-publishing route? You've got *Invertigo* and *All American Girl*.

AH: Yeah. Well, uh....

CM: Do you have any interest in self-publishing?

AH: No. I can't even keep being a freelancer together! I couldn't handle publishing my own book. If or when I do creator-owned books, it will be with another publisher.

CM: So if *Ghost* gets made into a multi-million dollar movie, you're just out of luck.

AH: I'm like...I'll go see it, and I'll have to pay!

CM: Will we ever see the *Indiana Jones* project that you were working on a while back?

AH: Yeah, I would really love to do that. That got shelved because, at the time I was working on it, I was living check to-check. I had to draw to keep away from poverty.



Hughes's own creations, *All American Girl* and *Invertigo*, two cards from the *Creator Universe* set

Lucasfilm was just gearing up to do the *Young Indiana Jones Chronicles*, and they had really altered *Indiana Jones* from this high adventure, have a good-time-while-you're-there kind of character to being *Encyclopedia Brown*. They liked my artwork; they said it was totally acceptable, but they wanted me to do more research to make sure the story was historically accurate. And I was not able to afford the amount of time to give the project the correct amount of research. So Dark Horse suggested, why don't we just shelve it for a while and work on it while you're a

little more flush. And I said, "Okay." When word started going around that there was going to be a fourth *Indiana Jones* movie, I started seriously thinking about maybe that being the time to do it. You see, I don't mind waiting to do it. Because I came up with the story, I am still happy with it, and this would just be the best comic I had ever done. And the longer it takes for me to do it, the better artist I'll be by the time I get to it. So it'll be a better comic the longer people have to wait.

CM: Well there was that one short story published in that *Young Indiana Jones* magazine a couple of years ago.

AH: Oh, that was a *Young Indiana Jones* two-pager.

CM: So it had nothing to do with your other project.

AH: No, but it was my only published *Indiana Jones* work, drawing *Young Indiana Jones*, and it was written by Kurt Marvels Busiek. He wrote a really deft story where *Young Indiana Jones* prevented Germany from keeping America out of World War I—and he did it in two pages! It was pretty damn good.

CM: Did you ever get to the penciling stage of your own *Indiana Jones* story?

AH: Oh no, it's just plotted. See, that was it—I couldn't get to the penciling stage because the story had not been approved by Lucasfilm yet. They approved the gist of the story, but they wanted more names, dates, and places. I've got to come up with that, but it's going to be fluff, because the story is not about historically accurate this-and-that, it's about fun, it's about adventure. It's about trying to recapture what was great about *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, which is basically just an A-quality homage to the Z grade serials of the thirties through the fifties. And color me funny, but I seem to think that an *Indiana Jones* comic could be an homage to the old



A Hughes pencil sketch from 1991

adventure strips—*Terry and the Pirates* and stuff like that, you know, *Jungle Jim* and *Flash Gordon*. The *Indiana Jones* comic should serve that function. Just for my own edification I started laying out the first issue, even though I didn't have approval on it. I would show it to people, and I've got unanimous, "Wow, that's *Indiana Jones*!" It made me feel good about continuing the project.

CM: Looking forward to the Al Williamson *Flash Gordon* project coming up?

AH: That's going to be so cool! I'm so glad he's doing his own artwork.

CM: There is now a whole line of emulators doing Adam Hughes-ish artwork—Stuart Immonen and Matt Haley, for instance. What do you think about it?



A Hughes sketch from 1990

AH: Every time some of their artwork comes out, Brian Stelfreeze turns to me and says, "The quickening is at hand, and there can be only one," you know? [Laughter] But there are a couple of guys out there, guys like Matt Haley and Stuart—

CM: I like Stuart Immonen's work a lot.

AH: Oh Stuart—I am so glad he's drawing Superman! If they would cut his hair I would just be a happy camper. Not Stuart's—I mean Superman's. There are guys like that, whom I've met—I'm friends with Matt Haley, I'm friends with Stuart—and they've told me, "I really have enjoyed your work, and you've been an influence on me." Which of course makes me feel a lot older than I already am—you know, these guys have more facial hair than me—

CM: Six years in the industry and you've already

AH: Yeah, I'm like, "Well kid, back in the twentieth century when I drew comics on paper" [laughter]—but then there are a couple guys out there—and I know who you are—who are, like, light boxing me. And these chimps have to die. [Laughter] These guys need to just go down hard. An example needs to be set. They know who they are, and I know who they are, so—watch your back!

CM: So after your run on *Ghost* is over, what's your dream project?

AH: Oh, at this time I'm just trying to keep afloat. It's funny, in a *Wizard* interview I had a few weeks ago, I mentioned that I would always love to do a World War II Captain America story. Like a week after that saw print, I got a call from Marvel, and they said, "We've got a couple of scripts we'd like to send you!" So I don't know if I have a dream project. I mean, there are characters I would love to work on—all of the iconic DC characters: Batman, Superman, and Wonder Woman. I would dearly love to do something on Captain America, or maybe someday the Fantastic Four, which I grew up on. But, you know, if I did work for Marvel Comics, Frank Miller would probably send somebody to hurt me! [Laughter] You can't work for Marvel and not be considered a traitor, which is a shame, because you can't work on these characters that you grew up on. But at some point you have to stop drawing other



Adam Hughes sketches at the Dallas Fantasy Fair.



A Hughes Phantom Lady "sketch" inked by Karl Story

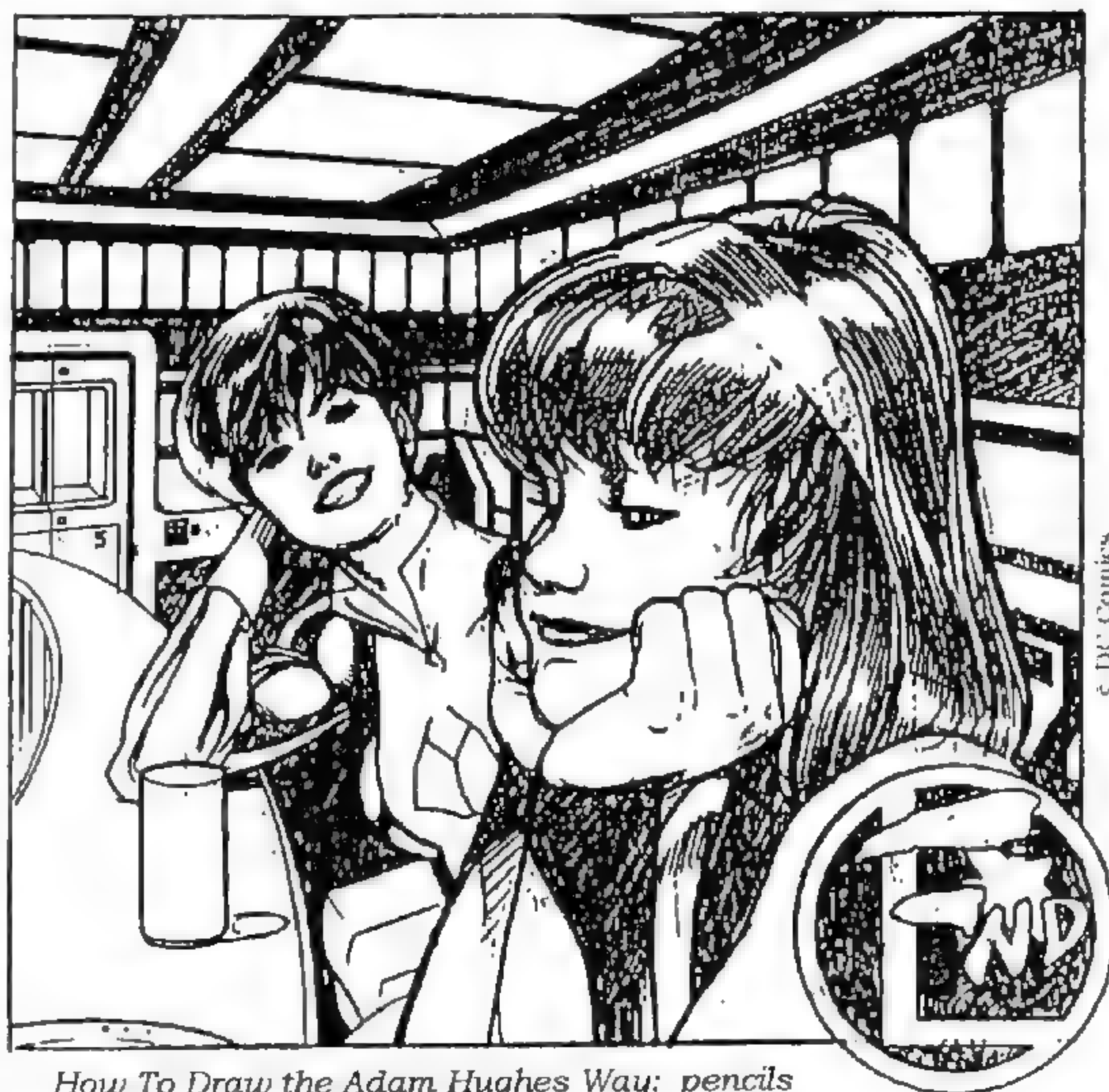
people's characters and start creating your own worlds.

CM: Would you ever want to do a *Star Wars* project?

AH: I love *Star Wars*—I love *Star Wars* to death! *Star Wars* is ninety-nine percent the reason why I draw comics nowadays, and I would love to work on it. But the bean counters at Lucasfilm are really tough to deal with, especially because *Star Wars* is becoming a cottage industry. You have these lawyers and accountants making creative decisions because a piece of paper tells them what's black and what's white—"Luke Skywalker wouldn't use adjectives!" or something like that. They seem to think you're the same sort of Johnny Lunchpail that clocks in every day at the Skywalker Ranch and files phone bills, or whatever. They don't understand that you keep hammering down a creative individual, he's not going to give you his best work. Whether he's the most professional person or not, he's going to stop feeling like he's an asset. And it's a major problem nowadays—it's always been a problem, not just nowadays, dammit!—these people who are in charge of these characters, to justify their jobs, they make arbitrary decisions. They say, "No, no, no, no—you've got to change this, you've got to change that."

And they're doing it just to be able to tell their boss, "I rejected three things from Dark Horse today, I must working hard, boss." They're just making your life difficult. And they do it very arbitrarily.

We were really good on *Star Trek*, the graphic novel, until the last nine pages. And then there was a change in employment at the Paramount licensing office, and all of a sudden, every Captain Kirk I was drawing was wrong. "No, no, no, you're doing it wrong!" It's not a lot of fun. Here are these characters that you love; the comics aren't legitimate continuity, so why do they need to ride roughshod over you? Why can't you just have fun with them? I mean, you're not going to turn



How To Draw the Adam Hughes Way: pencils from *Legionnaires* 7!

Luke Skywalker into a closet homosexual; you're not going to, I don't know, do something with Princess Leia's buns. You just want to try to write and draw the characters the way they were in the movies. But because they're so stringent in their rules, you can't even come close. And then everybody sits around and goes, "Gee, the comics aren't like the movies! The books aren't like the movies!" Well, it's because the people who own the movies aren't letting us flex our creative wings.

I realize I may be a bit of a hypocrite

saying this, because I've got this Indiana Jones thing, but I was really given an unprecedented amount of freedom. They were just saying, "Yeah, we like what you're doing. We like the way you draw Indiana Jones." I thought they were going to reject things left and right. You know, Indiana Jones and the Jungle Queen? Here, take it, but you're not going to want it. And they said, "Yeah, we love it."

CM: Thanks for taking the time to do this interview.



A BRIEF SURVEY OF ADAM HUGHES COMICS

We remember exactly when we became fans of Adam Hughes's art. It was before *Ghost*. It was before *Justice League*—and before he had established a reputation for drawing beautiful women. It was before *Maze Agency*. It was even before his *Death Hawk* comic book for Adventure Comics.

Early in 1988 we saw a one-page ad for *Death Hawk*, an upcoming science fiction/adventure series. We don't remember where we saw the ad—*Star Rangers 4*, perhaps, or maybe *Elf Warrior 3* or *Adventurers 3*. But it featured a Han Solo-looking guy holding a cool futuristic gun. At his side was—what else—a lovely woman. The credits included this: "Drawn by ADAM HUGHES." Whoever this guy was, he would be someone to watch.

Death Hawk 1 hit the stands around May 1988, and of course we picked it up. While the art wasn't quite as good as the ad (perhaps because Hughes didn't ink the comic himself?), it was good enough to make us want to continue following his work. Eventually, we tracked down his earliest published work: a pin-up in *Eagle 6* (Crystal Comics, June 1987); a six-page *Death Hawk* back-up story in *Star Rangers 2* (Adventure Comics, November 1987); an eleven-page feature story in *Warriors 1* (Adventure Comics, November 1987) inked by *Xenozoic Tales* collaborator Steve Stiles; and two December 1987 comics from Adventure: *Star Rangers 3* (a six-page *Death Hawk* story back-up inked by Robert Lewis) and *Warriors 2* (an eleven-page story inked by Del Barras).

Hughes continued to work for Adventure into 1988, but he ended up drawing only the first issue of *Death Hawk*. In July, his work started appearing in *Blood of Dracula* by Apple Comics. (In our interview with Hughes this issue, he mentions that his Apple work preceded his Adventure work. He may have been referring to the order in which it was completed—in fact, *Blood of Dracula 4* mentions that the issue contains his "first sale." Or perhaps they meant his first Apple sale.)

The Apple work is remarkably ill-conceived. In most of the issues, Hughes is working over Neil Vokes breakdowns and inked by Mark Wheatley—neither of whom are stylistically compatible with him. In fact, the work barely looks like Hughes at all.



Of all the early art not self-inked, Dan McKinnon turns out to be the most suitable inker for Hughes. In particular, "Demonsmoke" from *Warriors 3* (March 1988) is a fine example.

Soon, Hughes moved to his first high-profile series, the full color *Maze Agency* for Comico Comics (December 1988). He drew the series on and off until landing his first major assignment, beginning *Justice League America* with #31 (October 1989). This was the series begun by Kevin Maguire, and Hughes's style was a perfect successor to Maguire's—both artists have a clean, simple style perfect for illustrating J.M. DeMatteis and Keith Giffen's light-hearted adventure series. But Hughes would not be able to maintain the monthly schedule

for long. He ended up penciling just over twelve of the next twenty issues, and then left the series.

By that time, however—early 1991—he had established himself as one of the best new talents in the industry, notable for drawing expressive faces, attractive men, and gorgeous women. In particular, his penciling of *Fire and Ice* in *JLA* received rave reviews.

For the next few years, Hughes's main output was covers for a variety of publishers—Marvel, DC, Dark Horse, and numerous smaller companies. Finally, in 1994, he began appearing regularly in the *Penthouse Comixanthology* and, early this year, became the more-or-less regular artist on Dark Horse's *Ghost*.

Adam Hughes is not generally listed among the "fan favorites" with Todd McFarlane, Jim Lee, or Frank Miller. And yet, like such artists as Michael Golden, Steve Rude, and Kevin Nowlan, his work is extremely well-respected within the art community, and he has a large, solid core of fans that quickly snatch up what little original artwork becomes available for sale.



Hughes/McKinnon art from *Warriors 3*

ADAM HUGHES CHECKLIST

Following is a list of most of Adam Hughes's published comic book-related work, arranged by format and publisher. Issues with interior work contain at least five pages of Hughes art unless otherwise noted. Reprint covers are generally not noted. (Special thanks to Larry Dempsey for assistance.)

INTERIOR ARTWORK

Marvel Comics:

G.I. Joe 111 (pin-up)

Namor Annual 3 (four pages)
She-Hulk (second series) 50 (two pages)
X-Men Annual (second series) part 1

DC Comics:

Batman Vs. Predator deluxe 2 (pin-up), 3 (trading card, same as pin-up)
Death Gallery 1 (pin-up)
Green Lantern Corps Quarterly 6 (pin-up)
Guy Gardner: Warrior 25 (pin-up)



Hughes/McKinnon art from Warriors 3

Justice League of America (second series) 31-35, 37-40, 43, 44, 45 (four pages), 51
Legionnaires 7, 9 (five pages), 10 (breakdowns), 12
Legion of Super-Heroes (1990 series) Annual 6 (pin-up)
Team Titans 1 (Redwing)
Teen Titans (third series) 93 (three pages)
Titans Sell-Out 1 (three pages)
Wonder Woman (second series) 50 (pin-up)

Alternative Comics:

A-1 True Life Bikini Special 1 (pin-up)
Comics' Greatest World: Ghost 3
Dark Horse Presents 50
Death Hawk 1
Doc Savage Manual of Bronze 1 (pin-up)
Eagle (first series) 6 (pin-up)
Elementals (second series) 12
Ghost 1, 2, part 3
Homage Studios Swimsuit Special 1 (pin-up)
Justice Machine (Millennium Comics) 1 (inks)
Lycra-Woman and Spandex-Girl 1 (pin-up)
Lycra-Woman and Spandex-Girl Halloween Special 1 (poster)
Magnus, Robot Fighter (second series) 8 (trading card)
Maze Agency 1-5, 8, 9, 12, Annual 1 (four pages)
Nexus 57
Punk and his Pals Special 1 (pin-up)
Savage Dragon 4, 5 (pin-up)
Star Rangers 2, 3
Ultraverse Origins 1 (two pages)
Warriors 1-3
Wildstorm Swimsuit 1 (one page)
Windsor 3 (poster)

Magazines and Fanzines, All Publishers:

Advance Comics (Capital City Distributors) 76 (interview)
Amazing Heroes 190 (interview)
Amazing Heroes Interviews 2 (one page)
Amazing Heroes Swimsuit Special 1-3 (pin-ups in all)
Inside Comics 3 (interview)
Marvel Swimsuit Special 1 (two pin-ups), 2 (two pin-ups), 3 (three pin-ups)
Penthouse 11/93 (preview of Penthouse Comics 1)
Penthouse Comix 1-4, 5 (breakdowns), 6 (one new page, one reprint page)
Previews (Diamond Distributors) 4/95 (interview)
Who's Who in the DC Universe (second series) 1 (two pages; Fire), 2 (two pages; Despero), 3 (two pages; Ice), 4 (two pages; Phantom Lady), 5 (two pages; Martian Manhunter), 7 (two pages; Justice League America), 11 (two pages; Big Barda), 13 (two pages; Arkham Asylum), 14 (two pages; Valor)
Wizard 45 (interview)
X-Men Poster Magazine 1 (pin-up reprinting X-Men Classic 79 cover), 3 (pin-up reprinting X-Men: The Early Years 3 cover)
Young Indiana Jones Chronicles 1 (two pages)

Books and Miscellaneous Items:

Aliens vs. Predator trading card

Capital City Distribution 1995 Calendar (one page; reproduces Ghost Stories trade paperback cover)
Catwoman T-shirt (Graphitti)
DC SkyBox trading cards (1993) 85 (Apparition), 90 (Shrinking Violet), 92 (Andromeda), 97 (Gossamer)
Gaijin Studios portfolio (one plate) (1992)
Ghost Stories trade paperback (reprints Comics' Greatest World Ghost story plus six new pages of pencil sketches)
Ghost trading cards 10, 13 (Dark Horse/Topps)
Heroes Aren't Hard to Find comic store ad (1994)
Heroes Convention 1994 ad and T-shirt (with Jason Pearson, Brian Stelfreeze, Cully Hamner, and Karl Story)
Justice League International Button Set (set of 4 buttons on a card; 3 are by Hughes, reprinted from comic book panels) (1990)
Legends of the Stargazers portfolio
Mantra promo poster
Mantra trading card
Marvel business card/trading card for Dana Moreshed (1991)
Marvel Christmas card (1990)
Ms. Mystic trading card
Penthouse Comix Ash Can
Penthouse Comix T-Shirt (Hurricane from #2 cover) (upcoming)
Phantom Lady Trade Paperback (two pin-ups)
Shotoose postcard
Spider-Man trading cards 73-81 (front and back inks over Mark Bagley pencils) (Fleer; 1994)
Spoof Comics trading cards: Justice Broads, Superbabe, X-Babes, and Swimsuit Special 4
Star Trek: Debt of Honor graphic novel
Teenagents trading card. Aurik
Ultraverse II trading cards (regular cards 11, 56 & 71 Mantra and bonus "UB1" Mantra are not by Hughes, but he's credited with "Character Design")
Ultraverse Master Series trading cards (regular card 36 Mantra and subset cards "U1" Solitaire, "U2" Prototype, "U3" Prime, and "U5" Sludge are not by Hughes, but he's credited with "Character Design")
Vampirella 1995 Calendar (3 pin-ups reprinting



Vampirella 1-3 covers)
Vampirella's Scarlet Legion fan club poster
Vampirella trading cards 53 (Vengeance of Vampirella 10 cover), 61 (Vampirella 1 cover), 63 (Vampirella 3 cover), 64 (Vampirella 2 cover), 68 (Vengeance of Vampirella 6 cover), 75 card back (Vengeance of Vampirella 7 cover)
Vampirella IV T-shirt (from #2 cover; Graphitti) (upcoming)
WildC.A.T.S. trading card 83 (Voodoo)
WildC.A.T.S. chromium trading card 65 (Zealot & Grifter)
Women of the DC Universe (poster)

COVER ARTWORK

Marvel Comics Covers:

Classic X-Men 71-79
Marvel Age 129
She-Hulk (second series) 52
X-Men: The Early Years 3, 12, 15

DC Comics Covers:

Justice League of America (second series) 34-51
Justice League Quarterly 1
Legionnaires 7, 13, 14, 16
Legion of Super-Heroes (1990) Annual 1
Mister Miracle (second series) 19
Star Trek: The Modala Imperative 1-4
Star Trek: The Next Generation: The Modala Imperative 1-4
Valor 8-10, 12
Who's Who (second series) 7

Alternative Comics Covers:

A-1 True Life Bikini Special 1
Classic Star Wars: A New Hope 2
Classic Star Wars: Return of the Jedi 1
Comics' Greatest World: Ghost 3
Detectives 1
Eagle: Dark Mirror Saga 1-4
Elementals (second series) 12, 17
Flaxen: Alter Ego 1 (reprint of trading card box cover art)
Ghost 1-3
Ghost Special 1
Hero Alliance 3
Lady Rawhide Special Edition 1 (upcoming)
Legends of the Stargazers 1-6
Lycra-Woman and Spandex-Girl Halloween Special 1
Maze Agency 9, 10, 12, 13, 19
New Frontiers 2
Nexus 57
Nexus the Liberator 1, 2, 4
Sally Forth 8
Spandex Tights 1
Spoof Comics 1, 2, 4-7
Strike Force Legacy 1
Vampirella (second series) 1-3
Vengeance of Vampirella 6, 7, 10
Wild, Wild West 1
Zorro 3

Magazine and Fanzine Covers, All Publishers:

Amazing Heroes 189, 190
Amazing Spoof Heroes Swimsuit Issue 4
Best of Amazing Heroes Swimsuit Special (1993)
Marvel Swimsuit Special 3
Penthouse Comix 2
Who's Who in the DC Universe (second series) 7

Book and Miscellaneous Items Covers, All Publishers:

Flaxen trading card box set cover
Ghost Stories trade paperback
Legends of the Stargazers, Book 1 (softcover)
Legion of Super-Heroes Archives, Volume 4
New Mutants trade paperback (reprints Marvel Graphic Novel 4)
Phantom Lady Trade Paperback

ALSO

Amazing Heroes 193 cover by Alan Davis and Mark Farmer is dedicated to Adam Hughes

The Readers Respond!

—but not in this issue, because we ran out of room! (Actually, *Spectrum* 4 was supposed to be a forty-pager, anyway!) But we want to hear from you! Write to us at the address at right! Next issue our letters column will return.

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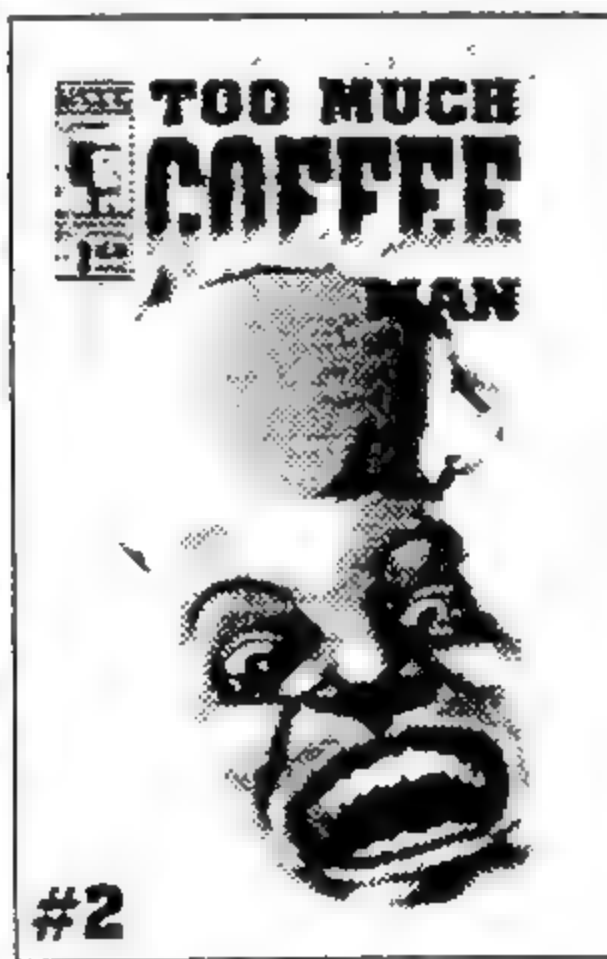
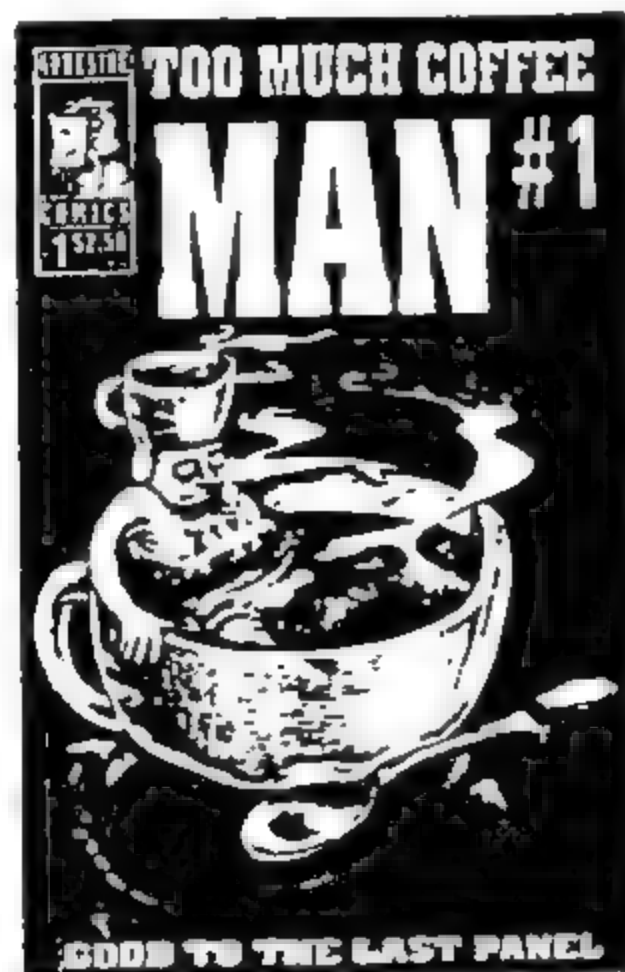
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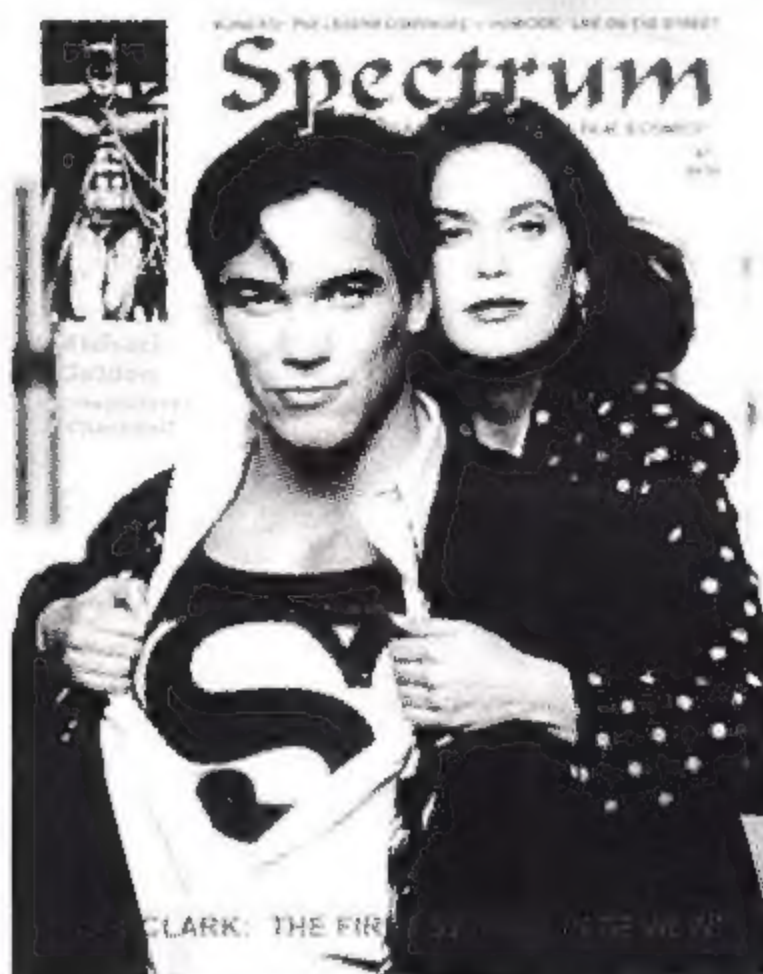
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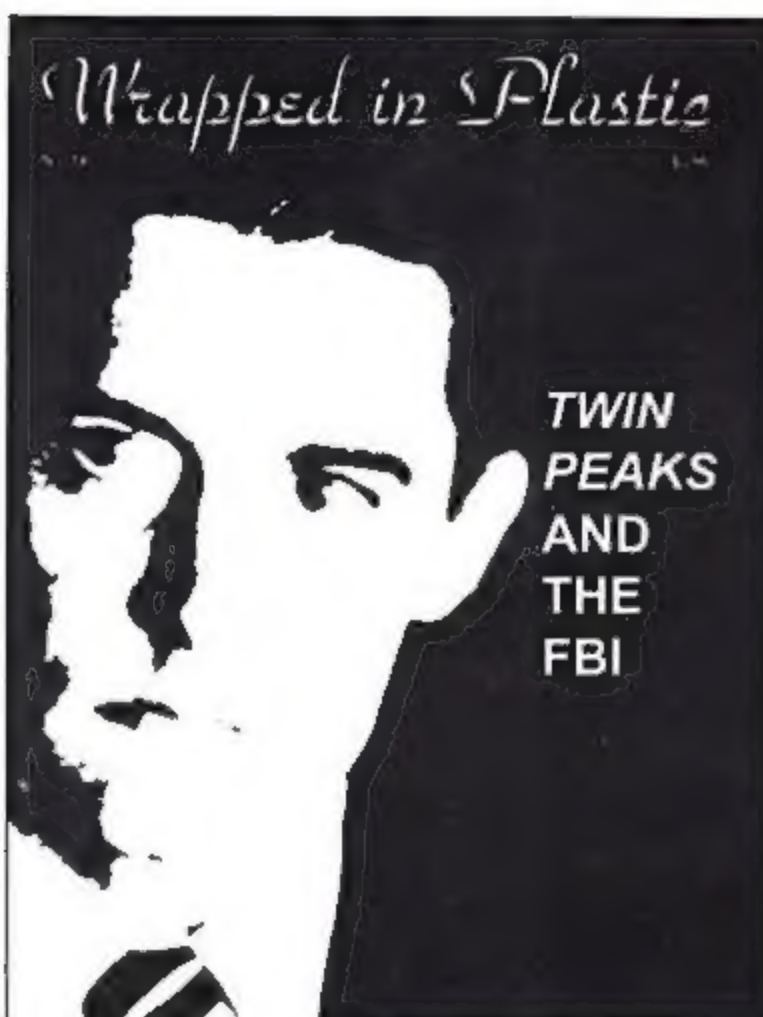
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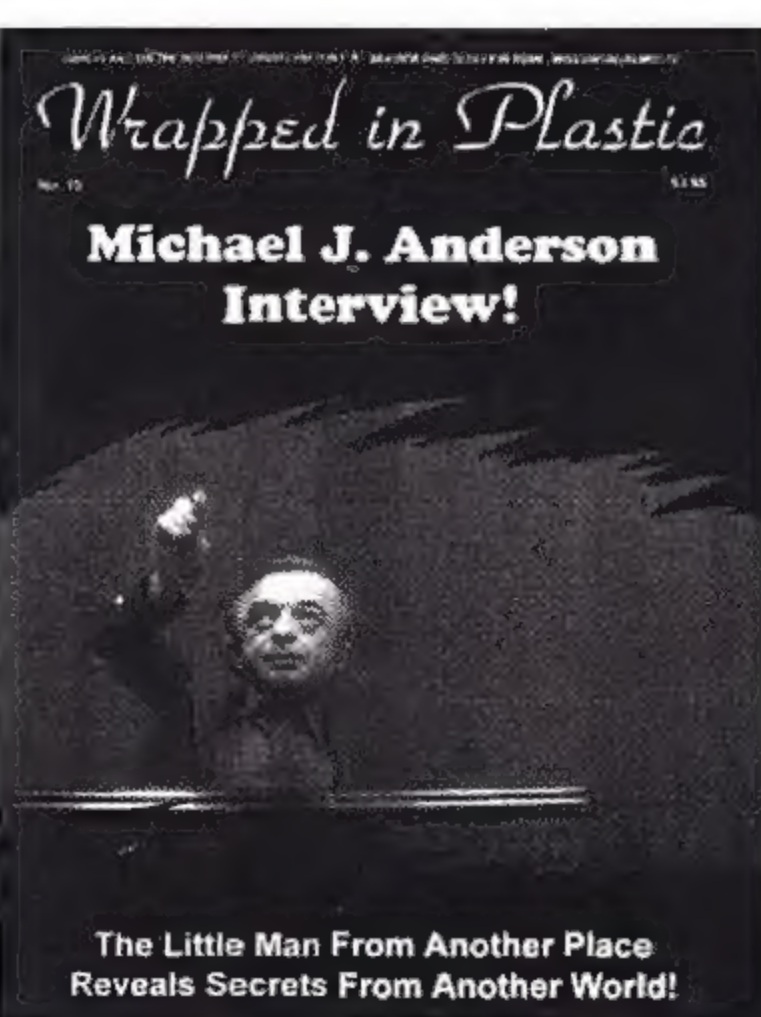
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